HEROES & VILLAINS: OUR PEOPLE OF THE YEAR

World Soccer

GLOBAL FOOTBALL SINCE 1960

January 2016

NEW YEAR FOCUS

THE BEST OF 2016

The year's big stories before they happen

LIONEL MESSI

World Player of the Year

MOURINHO

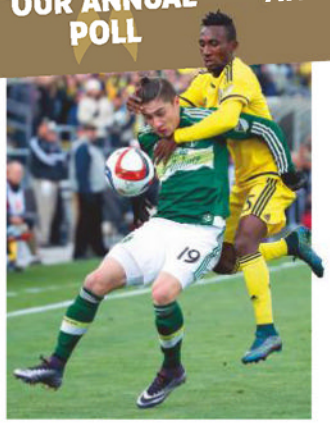
Where next for the Sacked One?

World Soccer AWARDS

- TEAM AND MANAGER OF THE YEAR REVEALED
- RESULTS OF OUR ANNUAL POLL
- WORLD'S OLDEST ANNUAL PLAYER AWARD

SEASON REVIEWS

How titles were won in South America, Japan & USA



PLUS

- CLUB WORLD CUP
- EURO 2016 PREVIEW
- SPANISH LIGA & ITALIAN SERIE A SQUADS

Get ready for the Euros

Art-of-football.com

WorldSoccer
Global football intelligence since 1960

Contents

January 2016

THE WORLD THIS MONTH

People in the news...on and off the pitch

4 **In pictures**
10 **From the Editor**
14 **Notebook** *World Soccer* online
16 **Ins & Outs** People on the move
18 **Keir Radnedge** FIFA's uncertain future
20 **Brian Glanville** The wonder of Bournemouth

STORIES 2016

24 **What to look out for this year**

EYEWITNESS

34 **Argentina** Boca's domestic double
38 **Colombia** The success of failure
40 **Japan** Club World Cup

TACTICS

60 **Possession: less is now more**

TALENT SCOUT

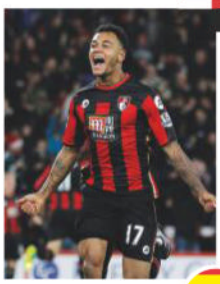
62 **Wingers**

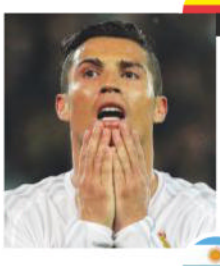
ARCHIVES

64 **January 1978**

THE GREAT MATCHES

98 **Italy v Brazil, 1982**





Follow World Soccer online
FOOTBALL 24-7

Follow @worldsoccermag Like World Soccer Magazine

SAVE MONEY ON WorldSoccer
Exclusive subscription offer.
See page 8

World Service

Exclusive reports from our worldwide network of correspondents

72 **Brazil** Tite's title once more
74 **USA** Timbers triumph in MLS
76 **Japan** Three out of four for Sanfrecce
78 **South America** League round-ups
81 **Tajikistan** Bittersweet for national coach
82 **Champions League** Group stage ends
84 **France** Angers and Caen eye Europe
86 **Spain** La Liga awards are bit of a joke

PLUS 68 Euro 2016 80 Global diary 88 ESM XI 89 Results, tables, fixtures 94 Squads

In Pictures

The global game caught on camera

COLOMBIA...players and staff from Santa Fe celebrate winning the Sudamericana Cup after a penalty-shoot out in Bogota against Huracan of Argentina

SPAIN... Barcelona's Luis Suarez goes to ground under a challenge from Valencia's Aymen Abdennour

PARAGUAY...Olimpia supporters celebrate their team's clausura title after beating Cerro Porteno

CHILE...fans of Colo Colo and Wanderers fight prior to the final game of the season, causing the match in Valparaiso to be postponed

PICTURES OF THE MONTH QR CODE

To see more of the best photos from the month, scan the QR code using any free QR reader that can be downloaded to your smartphone. You can also see the images by logging on to http://po.st/AwbQ4Q

BRAZIL...Rogerio Ceni kisses the Sao Paulo badge on the Morumbi stadium pitch as his 25-year career as a goalkeeper comes to an end, having scored a remarkable 131 goals for the club

TURKEY...Galatasaray captain Selcuk Inan celebrates after scoring against Astana in the Champions League

FRANCE...Rennes defend against Saint-Etienne in their Ligue 1 match at the Stade Geoffroy-Guichard

YES! I would like to subscribe to World Soccer

Please tick your preferred payment method

☐ UK Direct Debit, pay only **£17.99** every 6 months, saving **40%** (full price ~~£30.00~~) TOP OFFER!

☐ UK 2 year cheque/cash/credit or debit card (26 issues), pay only **£71.49**, saving **40%** (full price ~~£119.98~~)

☐ UK 1 year cheque/cash/credit or debit card (13 issues), pay only **£38.99**, saving **35%** (full price ~~£59.99~~)

OVERSEAS RATES SAVE UP TO 30%

+4403303334555 quote code BRD5 or visit **magazinesdirect.com/BRD5**
US toll free number 1 888 313 5528
(lines open Mon-Fri 9am- 8p, Sat 9 am -4pm EST)

YOUR DETAILS

Mr/Mrs/Ms/Miss: Forename:

Surname:

If you would like to receive emails from Time Inc. (UK) Ltd and World Soccer containing news, special offers and product and service information and take part in our magazine research via email, please include your email below.

Email:

Address:

Zip/Postcode:

Country:

Home Tel No: (inc. area code)

Would you like to receive messages to your mobile from Time Inc. (UK) Ltd and World Soccer containing news, special offers, product and service information and take part in our research? If yes, please include your mobile phone number here.

Mobile:

Date of birth: D D M M Y Y Y Y

I WOULD LIKE TO SEND A GIFT TO:

Please also fill out "Your Details" above. To give more than one subscription, please supply address details on a separate sheet

Mr/Mrs/Ms/Miss: Forename:

Surname:

Address:

Postcode:

Choose from 3 easy ways to pay:

1. I enclose cheque/international money order for £_____ made payable to Time Inc. (UK) Ltd.
2. Please debit my ☐ Mastercard ☐ Visa ☐ Visa Debit ☐ Amex ☐ Maestro (UK only)

Card No:

Issue No: (Maestro only) Start date: (Maestro only) D D / Y Y Expiry date: D D / Y Y

Signature: Date:
(I am over 18)

3. Pay only £17.99 every 6 months by Direct Debit

INSTRUCTION TO YOUR BANK OR BUILDING SOCIETY TO PAY BY DIRECT DEBIT
For office use only. Originator's reference - 764 221

Name of bank:

Address of bank:

Postcode:

Account name:

Sort code: Account no:

Please pay Time Inc. (UK) direct debits from the account detailed on this instruction subject to the safeguards assured by the Direct Debit guarantee. I understand that this instruction may remain with Time Inc. (UK) Ltd and, if so, details will be passed electronically to my bank or building society.

Signature: Date:
(I am over 18)

SEND THIS COUPON TO

UK Time Inc. (UK) Ltd FREEPOST RTKA-YLJG-HAAK 9-16 Perrymount Road Haywards Heath WEST SUSSEX RH16 3DH *(no stamp required)*.

OVERSEAS Time Inc. (UK) Ltd PO BOX 272 Haywards Heath WEST SUSSEX RH16 3FS UK (*stamp required for overseas*).

Offer open to new subscribers only. **Final closing date for all orders is 2nd February 2016**. Orders purchased as a gift before the 11th December 2015 will start with the February 2016 issue published in January. All gift orders purchased after this date will begin with the first available issue. If you would like your gift subscription to start with an earlier issue please contact customer services on +44 (0)330 333 0233. **Orders purchased for yourself** will start with the next available issue – please allow up to 6 weeks for delivery, 8 weeks for overseas orders. The full subscription rate is for 1 year (13 issues) and includes postage and packaging. If the magazine ordered changes frequency per annum, we will honour the number of issues paid for, not the term of the subscription. Direct Debit offer is available to UK subscribers only. Credit/debit card charges will be taken in sterling. This offer is subject to a minimum term of 12 months. Cancellations are not permitted until the end of this initial period and we will not issue you a refund. Should you wish to cancel after the minimum term, please contact our customer care team. **For enquiries and overseas rates contact magazinesdirect@quadrantsubs.com or call +44 (0) 330 333 0233** **The digital version comes free with the print edition of your subscription and is available strictly on a trial basis. Time Inc. (UK) Ltd reserves the right to withdraw free access to the digital version at any time. The *Rewards* scheme is available for all active print subscribers of magazines published by Time Inc. (UK) Ltd, free of charge. Digital subscribers also get access as long as the subscription has been purchased directly through the publishers at **magazinesdirect.com**. Full terms and conditions are available at **mymagazinerewards.co.uk**. For enquiries contact **rewards@quadrantsubs.com** or call 0330 333 0233 between 08.30am to 17.30pm (GMT) Monday to Friday. Time Inc. (UK) Ltd who publish World Soccer, will collect your personal information to process your order. Time Inc. (UK) Ltd would like to contact you by post or telephone to promote and ask your opinion on our magazines and services. Please tick here if you prefer not to hear from Time Inc. (UK) Ltd ☐ Time Inc. (UK) Ltd may occasionally pass your details to carefully selected organisations so that they can contact you by telephone or post with regards to promoting and researching their products and services. Please tick here if you prefer not to be contacted ☐ Time Inc. (UK) Ltd would like to send messages to your mobile with offers from carefully selected organisations and brands, promoting and researching their products and services. If you want to receive messages please tick here ☐ Time Inc. (UK) Ltd would like to email you with offers from carefully selected organisations and brands, promoting and researching their products and services. If you want to receive these messages please tick here ☐

BRD5

PLUS enjoy these great subscription benefits:

- Enjoy the convenience of home delivery each month
- Save an additional 40% off the normal subscription price
- Get exclusive extras with *Rewards* every month. Join *Rewards* at worldsoccer.com/rewards

- GO DIGITAL! Every subscription includes access to the digital version for iPad and iPhone.**

OVERSEAS RATES
SAVE UP TO 30%
+44 0330 333 4555
quote code BRD5 or visit
magazinesdirect.com/BRD5
US toll free number 1 888 313 5528
(lines open Mon-Fri 9am-8pm, Sat 9am-4pm EST)

BY PHONE
0330 333 4555
Quote code **BRD5**
7 days a week from 8am to 9pm (UK time). Overseas: +44 (0)330 333 4555

WorldSoccer

It's not too late to subscribe to World Soccer from just £17.99*

PLUS SAVE up to 40%

*every 6 months by Direct Debit

ORDER ONLINE

magazinesdirect.com/BRD5

Complete the coupon opposite

THE DIRECT DEBIT GUARANTEE · This Guarantee is offered by all banks and building societies that accept instructions to pay Direct Debits · If there are any changes to the amount, date or frequency of your Direct Debit Time Inc. (UK) Ltd will notify you 10 working days in advance of your account being debited or as otherwise agreed. If you request Time Inc. (UK) Ltd to collect a payment, confirmation of the amount and date will be given to you at the time of the request. · If an error is made in the payment of your Direct Debit, by Time Inc. (UK) Ltd or your bank or building society you are entitled to a full and immediate refund of the amount paid from your bank or building society – If you receive a refund you are not entitled to, you must pay it back when Time Inc. (UK) Ltd asks you to · You can cancel a Direct Debit at any time by simply contacting your bank or building society. Written confirmation may be required. Please also notify us.

FROM THE EDITOR

Congratulations to Lionel Messi, Luis Enrique and Barcelona on sweeping the board in the annual World Soccer Awards (page 45). There were convincing margins of victory in all three categories (Player, Manager, Team) but also some notable, interesting dissenters in the voting.

At the end of a year when football has seemed in perpetual crisis, it is re-assuring to get back to basics and celebrate achievements on the pitch. So many of 2015's headliners, the heroes and villains of the global game, will be remembered for their involvement in the FIFAgate scandal.

> At the end of a year when football has seemed in perpetual crisis, it is re-assuring to get back to basics and celebrate achievements on the pitch

Is it too much to hope that in 2016 a better calibre of leader emerges from a new, post-crisis FIFA? Certainly, the less than inspiring candidates for FIFA president do not offer a great deal of optimism on that front.

While most of Europe's club football is at the halfway stage of the season, many leagues in the rest of the world have completed their campaigns. So we have reviewed the seasons in Argentina, Brazil, Japan, USA and the rest of South America.

Wishing you all the best in 2016.

Gavin Hamilton, Editor

10 SIGNIFICANT EVENTS THIS MONTH

1 Barcelona sweep the board in *World Soccer* Awards ..... page 45
2 More FIFA arrests ..... pages 10 & 18
3 Club World Cup in Japan ..... page 40
4 Boca's domestic double ..... page 34
5 Sanfrecce win J.League ..... page 76
6 Another title for Tite in Brazil ..... page 72
7 Portland Timbers win MLS ..... page 74
8 Minnows on the rise in France ..... page 84
9 Manchester United crash out of Champions League ..... page 82
10 Leicester City top the Premier League ..... page 60

HOLLAND

Home...Twente's De Grolsch Veste

Twente banned from Europe for three years

Twente face an uncertain future after they were banned from European competition for three years by the Dutch FA and threatened with having their playing licence revoked for agreeing a deal to give player transfer fee rights to an outside investor.

World Soccer has previously reported how documents released by the *Football Leaks* website had included a third-party ownership contract between cash-strapped Twente and Malta-based Doyen Sports Investments.

The agreement reportedly allowed the investors, who injected €5million ($5.46m) into the club in exchange for the transfer rights of seven players, to have a say in Twente's transfer dealings, against international football rules. The players included Dusan Tadic, who was sold to Southampton in summer 2014 for a reported £10m fee.

FIFA has banned third-party player ownership and the Dutch FA said it had been "deliberately misled" by Twente, whose president Aldo Van der Laan resigned.

Twente were also fined €45,250 and warned that their playing licence will be revoked if they fail to comply with an FA investigation.

"Thank you for all you have done for me. I owe you a lot and we will all miss you. Good luck in the future"

Out-of-favour midfielder Cesc Fabregas pays tribute to his former Chelsea manager Jose Mourinho (right)

SWITZERLAND

More as arrests as FIFA crisis intensifies

Ricardo Teixeira, the former Brazilian federation president, and Marco Polo Del Nero, the CBF's current boss, were among 16 people indicted by the FBI in the latest round of arrests and indictments.

Teixeira and Del Nido were accused by the American investigators of being "involved in criminal schemes involving well over $200million (£132m) in bribes and kickbacks".

The latest indictments were announced hours after two senior FIFA figures were arrested in Zurich.

Alfredo Hawit and Juan Angel Napout, the current presidents of CONCACAF and CONMEBOL respectively, were held on suspicion of bribery in the same Zurich hotel, the luxury Baur au Lac, where FIFA officials were arrested in dawn raids in May.

Accused...Alfredo Hawit (top) and Juan Angel Napout

HEROES & VILLAINS

STEVAN JOVETIC

On hearing Buducnost Podgorica's 22-year-old striker Milivoje Raicevic had torn cruciate ligaments but his club could not afford to pay for medical care, Internazionale's Montenegrin international covered all the bills even though he had never met the player.

Assistance...Stevan Jovetic

CARLISLE UNITED

Players from the English fourth-tier side mucked in to help out the local community after a severe storm in the region left homes flooded and without power.

Community care...Carlisle players help storm victims

ANTONIO SANABRIA

At 19 years and 277 days, the Sporting Gijon striker became the youngest player to score a hat-trick in Europe's top five leagues this season. His goals came in the 3-1 win against Las Palmas and he became the first Gijon player since Mate Bilic in 2008 to hit a treble in La Liga.

ROGERIO CENI

Sao Paulo's record-breaking goalscoring keeper was given a farewell match by the club to mark his retirement at the age of 42.

KEREM DEMIRBAY

After being sent off by female referee Bibi Steinhaus in Fortuna Dusseldorf's German second-tier game against FSV Frankfurt, the 22-year-old former Turkey youth international reportedly said women had no place in men's football. As punishment, his club made him take charge of a girls' game between Haan 06 and Langenfeld the following weekend.

Turf war...Marwin Hitz damages the penalty spot

MARWIN HITZ

Augsburg's goalkeeper was sent a bill for €122.92 by Cologne after he scuffed up the penalty spot before Anthony Modeste's spot-kick for the hosts. The 28-year-old, who saved the kick, was invoiced for the cost of a piece of turf and two hours' work to replace it.

MOHAMED OULD ABDEL AZIZ

It was alleged that the president of Mauritania got so bored during his country's Super Cup Final, between Tevragh-Zeina and ACS Ksar, that he demanded the match be curtailed, with the score standing at 1-1 after 63 minutes, and go straight to a penalty shoot-out.

Suspended...Fred

FRED

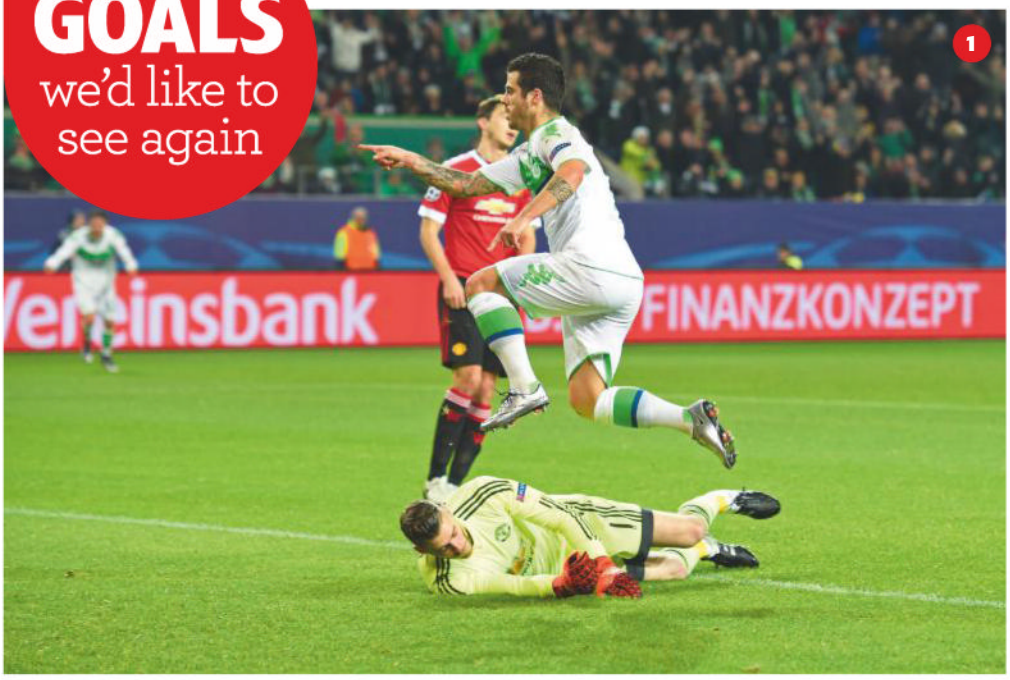
Brazil's midfielder – not the 2014 World Cup striker – was banned for a year by CONMEBOL after failing a drugs test at the 2015 Copa America.

"In the first half, we could have rented the Bayern half as a car park"

Darmstadt coach Dirk Schuster after his side's German Cup defeat in Munich

GOALS we'd like to see again

To see video footage of these goals, and many more that we have selected, scan the QR code using any free QR reader that can be downloaded to your smartphone. You can also see the videos by logging on to http://po.st/6ZBLsU



1 VIEIRINHA
Wolfsburg v Manchester United
A slick passing move cuts open the United defence before the winger finishes neatly.

2 PAULO DYBALA
Juventus v Lazio
Flicks the ball up with his right foot and then controls it on his left knee before volleying home with his left foot.

3 RENATO SANCHES
Benfica v Academica
Scores with a tremendous 30-yard right-foot shot after cutting in from the left flank.

4 DORIN ROTARIU
Dinamo Bucharest v Petrolul
Controls a nod down from a team-mate just outside the penalty area before unleashing an unstoppable left-foot volley into the top corner.

5 JAMES JEGGO
Adelaide United v Sydney
After his first volley hits the crossbar, the ball eventually comes back to him and he strikes a similar volley beyond the keeper.

6 IBRAHIMA DIEDHIOU
Senegal Under-23s v Tunisia Under-23
Hits a first-time half-volley from the edge of the centre circle that sails over the head of the Tunisian goalkeeper and into the net.

WINNERS

SANTA FE
The Colombians beat Huracan in the Sudamericana Cup to win a first international trophy in their 74-year history.

BURIRAM UNITED
Not only did they win a third successive Thai Premier League championship, they managed it without losing any of their 34 games.

PORTLAND TIMBERS
Became MLS champions for the first time – in only their fifth season – after beating Columbus Crew in the Final.

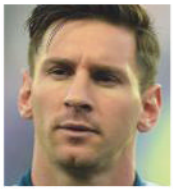
LOSERS

MANCHESTER UNITED
Louis Van Gaal's team crashed out of the Champions League in the group stage after a 3-2 defeat away to Wolfsburg.

GARRY MONK
Led Swansea City to a club-record eighth place in the Premier League last season, before being sacked this term.

REAL MADRID
Kicked out of the Spanish Cup for fielding the ineligible Denis Cheryshev in the first leg of their tie with Cadiz.

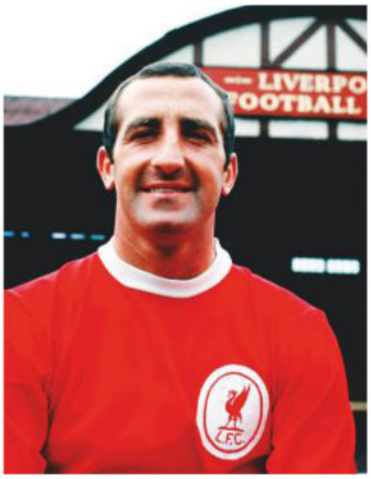
"I purposely don't sing the anthem. It doesn't change anything. The Pumas [Argentina's rugby team] burst into tears. We don't"



Lionel Messi responds to the charge of insufficient patriotism before an international

OBITUARIES

Lucian BALAN (1959–2015)
A European Cup winner with Steaua Bucharest in 1986, the midfielder committed suicide at his home in Baia Mare following the death of his mother.



Final agony...Gerry Byrne broke his collarbone

Gerry BYRNE (1938–2015)
Left-back who spent all his career with Liverpool, making over 300 appearances and winning the 1965 FA Cup Final – in which he carried on playing despite breaking his collarbone. Won two caps for England and was a member of the 1966 World Cup squad.

Bobby CAMPBELL (1937–2015)
Former Fulham, Portsmouth and Chelsea manager who also worked in Kuwait with the country's two biggest club sides, Al Arabi and Qadsia. An England youth international as a player, he was a coach at Arsenal under Bertie Mee before moving into management.

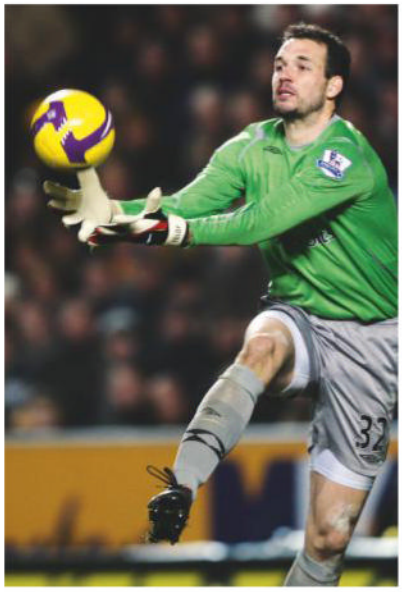
Blue period...Bobby Campbell with then-Chelsea chairman Ken Bates

Loyal...Marton Furlop played for nine clubs in England

Horrific...Arnold Peralta died in a drive-by shooting in his hometown of Le Ceiba in Honduras

Arnold PERALTA (1989–2015)
The Honduras and Olimpia midfielder was shot dead while on holiday in his hometown of La Ceiba, on the country's Caribbean coast. The 26-year-old played for Scottish side Rangers until January 2015 and played at the 2012 Olympic Games, although he missed the 2014 Brazil World Cup through injury.

Marton FULOP
(1983–2015)
Hungarian goalkeeper who played for nine English clubs, including Sunderland and Manchester City, he died from cancer at the age of just 32. Capped 24 times by his country, he ended his career in Greece with Asteras Tripoli after having a tumour removed from his arm in June 2013.



Pal VARHIDI (1931–2015)
Hungary international who captained the side that won Olympic bronze at the Rome Games in 1960, he was a league winner with Ujpest Dozsa that same year before winning it four times as club coach. In 1998 he became part of the only father-and-son duo to have both won the Hungarian title as coaches when his son, Peter, led Ujpest to the championship.

Brian LOMAX
(1948–2015)
The founder of Supporters Direct and the founding father of the supporters trust movement across the UK. Lomax became involved with the United Kingdom's first supporters trust at then troubled Northampton Town in the early 1990s and became the first supporter to be elected director of a football club after supporters and community rallied round to save the club in 1992. He later went on to become the managing director of Supporters Direct which helped many clubs, including Premier League side Swansea City, set up their own supporters trusts.

Spotter...Alan Hodgkinson saw Schmeichel's talent

Alan HODGKINSON (1926–2015)
Keeper who appeared for England while playing in the Second Division. He played 674 times for Sheffield United before becoming a coach. Credited with bringing Peter Schmeichel to Manchester United.

"The new generation of players are more or less impossible to handle. They want everything right away"

Paris Saint-Germain coach Laurent Blanc responds to the "play me or else" threats of midfielder Adrien Rabiot (left)

Notebook

Highlights from some of our regular on-line contributions

GERMANY

Losing for the first time this season, Bayern Munich's 3-1 reverse at Borussia Monchengladbach was not only an early Christmas present for those despairing at the Bavarians' one-party rule in the Bundesliga – it also meant overtime for the statisticians, who tore into the numbers behind the shock result.

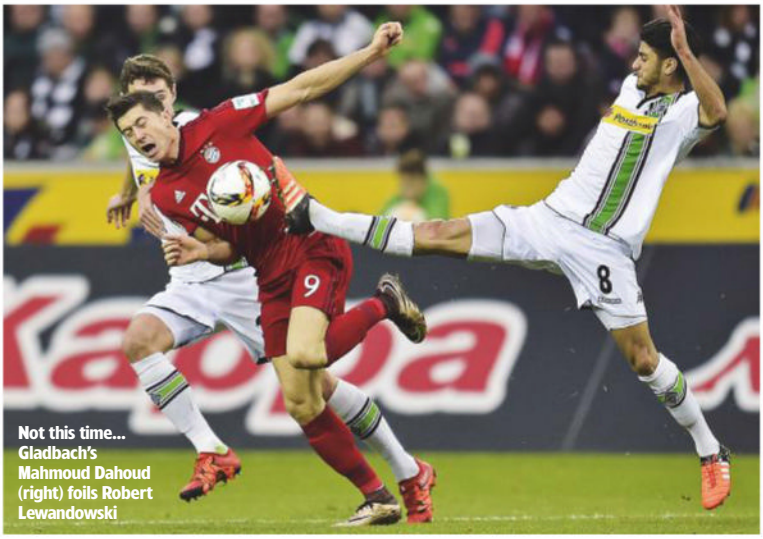
- Bayern's first *Hinrunde* (autumn championship) beating since October 2012 (56 games).
- Pep Guardiola's first *Hinrunde* loss.
- The unique sight this term of Bayern conceding more than once and failing to keep a second-half clean sheet.
- Guardiola keeping an unchanged side; the first time he had done so in 99 games.

If Bayern's dream of the perfect, undefeated campaign now lies in tatters, they only have themselves to blame.

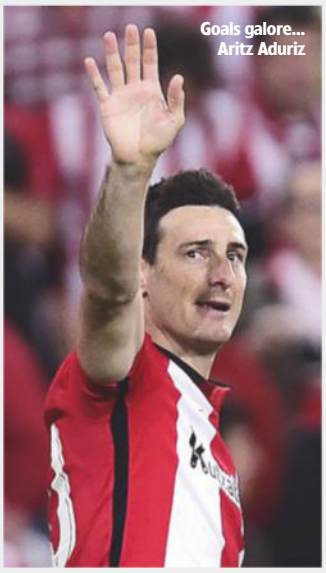
They spurned a number of chances and in the second half almost completely disintegrated, playing too high a defensive line and all at sea when Gladbach let the counter-attacking dogs loose.

But while it was an afternoon to forget for the champions, at least they had one item of good news. Franck Ribery returned after nine months out with an ankle injury and came off the bench to net his side's late consolation.

Nick Bidwell



Not this time... Gladbach's Mahmoud Dahoud (right) foils Robert Lewandowski



Goals galore... Aritz Aduriz

SPAIN

Messi? Suarez? Neymar? Ronaldo? Griezmann? Pah! Five goals in three days, including a left-foot, right-foot, header hat-trick against Rayo Vallecano, took Athletic Bilbao's Aritz Aduriz to 38 goals in 2015. It also took him beyond Luis Suarez and onto 20 goals in all competitions this season – the best in the country.

"I hope Barcelona don't sign him," joked Bilbao coach Ernesto Valverde.

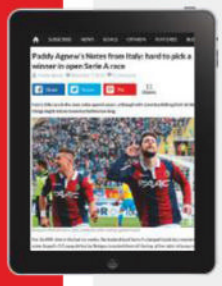
Sid Lowe

ITALY

Complimenti to Bologna's Roberto Donadoni, who replaced Delio Rossi in October and picked up 10 points in his first five games.

A serious, able coach, Donadoni won't play the media game of clever or controversial sound bites. And last season he earned all manner of plaudits for the manner in which he guided Parma through a difficult time which ended with them bankrupt and relegated to the semi-professional Serie D.

Paddy Agnew



Weekly notes from Brazil, Spain, Germany and Italy at **worldsoccer.com**

BRAZIL

Four years ago Muricy Ramalho's career changed forever after a Club World Cup clash with Barcelona.

Lionel Messi and co humiliated the Santos of Ramalho, who up until then was the king of the Brazilian championship. The high priest of pragmatism, his teams were usually big and strong, dangerous from set-pieces and made no concessions whatsoever to aesthetics.

"If you want to see a spectacle, go to the theatre," was one of his favourite lines – until it was made redundant by the manner in which Barcelona danced through his defence. "We were beaten by a football we did not even know existed," said Santos president Luis Alvaro afterwards.

Ramalho went with what he knew – three big centre-backs – and then cut a pitiful figure on the bench, squirming in agony, pulling his cap over his face as if he wished he were anywhere else.

Barca convert... Muricy Ramalho

Ramalho's subsequent sides have tried to pass the ball more, and now he takes over Flamengo after a spell out of the game – first for health reasons and then after visiting Europe, from where he has come back drooling about Barca, their youth work and collective idea of play.

It will be fascinating to see how much of this he tries to introduce in his new post.

Tim Vickery

Paul GARDNER

THE WORLDWIDE VIEW

From the 'Special One' to the humbled one

Beginning of the end...Jose Mourinho was said to have lost the dressing room at Chelsea

And then, just when you thought 2015 could not possibly get any more bizarre – soccerwise, that is – there came this utterly ridiculous business of Jose Mourinho. The "Special One" himself...sacked!

But no, not sacked at all. What, then? I read what the official Chelsea statement said about him, which really sounded as though they were actually hiring, rather than firing him. Or maybe just sending him a Christmas card? "All at Chelsea thank Jose for his immense contribution...three league titles, FA Cup, Community Shield and three League Cup wins....the most successful manager in our 110-year history...a much-loved, respected and significant figure at Chelsea...he will always be warmly welcomed back to Stamford Bridge."

Welcomed back, but not right now. Michael Emenalo, Chelsea's technical director, added some more sugary praise saying "there is huge sentiment for the individual who has done so much for the club" before offering the bewildering verdict that "there obviously seemed to be a palpable discord between manager and players". That "seemed to be" doesn't make too much sense in a sentence that begins with "Obviously..."

Whatever. Mourinho is on his bike because, using a hoary cliche, he lost the dressing room it seems.

Yet, hoary cliches don't go back that far. A much older cliche - so old that it's now regarded as ancient wisdom - tells us that pride goes before a fall. That sounds a bit more like it.

I'm betting that a show of hands from those who've been waiting for this to happen would produce a forest of waving arms.

To be super-successful as a coach – well, at pretty much anything, really – is fine, but to keep reminding the world of just how good you are, how much wiser than everyone else, is surely tempting fate.

Can Mourinho – can anyone – possibly be as special as he would have us believe? Sprinkled liberally among Mourinho's undoubted triumphs are dark moments, occasions that he will not remind us of. Ten years ago, his appalling persecution of Swedish referee Anders Frisk, based on a demonstrably false charge, resulted in Frisk's retirement from the game. UEFA's referee boss accused Mourinho of being "an enemy of football".

Mourinho's tendency to make wild accusations was repeated soon after that, when his goalkeeper Petr Cech suffered a fractured skull. Deliberately inflicted by Reading's Stephen Hunt, said Mourinho.

This season has seen the case of Chelsea's doctor, Eva Carneiro, accused by Mourinho of entering the field when she should have known better. The offence appeared trivial, but Mourinho's heated vindictiveness turned it into something of a cause celebre with Carneiro leaving – and since suing – the club.

In addition to losing a dressing room, Mourinho got too big for his boots. His humiliation has now come about, caused by his failure to do the very thing that was supposed to be his formidable strength, one he never failed to bring to our attention: his ability to get the best out of his players.

Losing the dressing room can only mean that the players no longer want to play for the coach. Far from getting the best out of them, he is bringing out the worst in them.

> Can Mourinho – can anyone – possibly be as special as he would have us believe?

The modern version of football has become a celebrity sport. Certainly, Mourinho – through his early successes plus his own pronouncements – came over as a celebrity coach. For such guys, the fame of success is more intense, but the fall of failure is more brutal.

That Mourinho will be back is a given. The only doubt involved is what he will have learned from this Christmas-card firing by Chelsea. Shall we get a chastened, less self-promoting coach, or will the old arrogance weather the storm to return in an even more special Mourinho? WS

"Arriving at a club in mid-season is hitting yourself in the face. You're not in control of anything. Not the physical preparation. Not the tactical profile of the team"

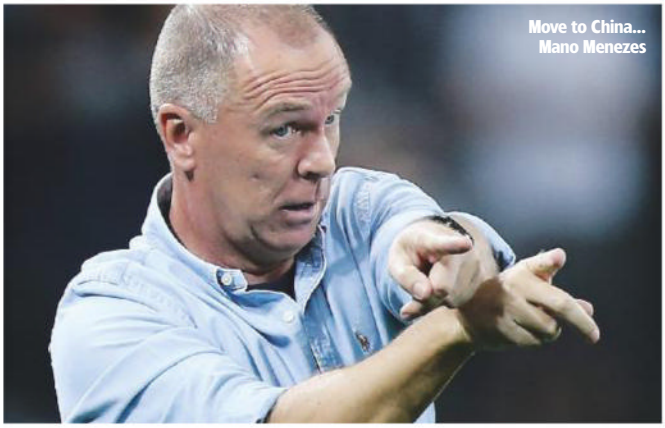
Carlo Ancelotti rules out a new coaching job in January

PEOPLE ON THE MOVE

Appointments, sackings and loans

IN

In at Stabaek... Billy McKinlay



Move to China... Mano Menezes

EUROPE

GARY NEVILLE replaced Nuno Espirito Santo in charge of Spanish side Valencia until the end of the season. Ex-Romania international **CONSTANTIN GALCA** took over from Sergio Gonzalez at Espanyol.

Former Scotland midfielder **BILLY McKINLAY**, who was sacked when David Moyes' assistant at Real Sociedad in La Liga, was named coach of Norwegian side Stabaek.

Former AEL Limassol boss **CHRISTAKIS CHRISTOFOROU** replaced Pambos Christodoulou in charge of Cyprus.

Holland central defender **RON VLAAR**, who was released by Aston Villa in the summer, joined AZ until the end of the season.

One-time Juventus and Roma coach **LUIGI DEL NERI** replaced Andrea Mandorlini as boss of Serie A strugglers Verona.

IGOR ANGELOVSKI, who took charge of two friendlies in November, was named Ljubinko Drulovic's permanent successor as coach of Macedonia.

LAURENTIU REGHECAMP left Litex Lovech after just four months and replaced Mirel Radoi as coach of Romanian champions Steaua Bucharest. **LJUPKO PETROVIC** took over at the Bulgarian club.

ASIA

Former national coach **MANO MENEZES** left Brazilian champions Corinthians to replace Cuca as boss of Chinese side Shandong Luneng.

New man at Valencia...Gary Neville

Scandinavian switch...Age Hareide

Hareide takes charge of Danes

AGE HAREIDE – the only coach to have won league titles in Norway (Rosenborg), Denmark (Brondby) and Sweden (Helsingborg and Malmo) – took charge of Denmark's national team, replacing Morten Olsen, who stepped down after Denmark's loss to Sweden in the Euro 2016 play-off.

OUT

Al Jazira exit... Abel Braga

EUROPE

Schalke terminated the contract of Ghana midfielder **KEVIN-PRINCE BOATENG**, who was suspended by the Bundesliga club in May.

Troyes parted company with coach **JEAN-MARC FURLAN** after 16 Ligue 1 games without a win.

Red Bull Salzburg dismissed coach **PETER ZEIDLER**.

Antalyaspor boss **YUSUF SIMSEK** left the Turkish side.

AFRICA

RAOUL SAVOY resigned as Gambia's national coach.

Last shout...Garry Monk could not halt Swansea's slump

Monk out at Swansea

Swansea City sacked manager **GARRY MONK** after one win in 11 Premier League games. Monk, who played for the club in all the top four divisions of English football, succeeded Michael Laudrup in February 2014 while still a player.

Maritzburg United parted ways with veteran coach **CLIVE BARKER** after he had been in charge of the struggling South African side for just six league games.

ASIA

ABEL BRAGA, who led Brazilian club Internacional to Liberatdores and Club World Cup success in 2006, was dismissed by UAE side Al Jazira.

SOCCER CAREER CONFERENCE

January 14-15, 2016
Baltimore, Maryland, USA
During the MLS SuperDraft

SMWW SPORTSMANAGEMENTWORLDWIDE

- Networking with industry leaders
- Career guidance from well-known sports executives
- Meet GM's Scouts, Agents and Front Office Personnel
- Learn career strategies to work in soccer
- Master strategies to catapult your soccer career
- Mentors who want to help you move up the ladder

SCHEDULE OF EVENTS

- Thursday noon: MLS Draft
- Thursday 6-9pm: Opening Night at the NSCAA Exhibit Hall
- Thursday 8pm-10pm: SMWW Welcome Reception: Pratt Street Ale House
- Friday noon: NWSL Draft
- Friday: 9am-5pm: SMWW Soccer Career Conference

Darren Eales
Atlanta President

Matt Martin
Timbers Scouting Director

Tom Glick
NYCFC President

John Print
FIFA Agent

Tommy Smyth
ESPN Soccer Analyst

Lynn Lashbrook
SMWW President

PAST & PRESENT SPEAKERS INCLUDE:

Keir Radnedge – Well-known Journalist, WorldSoccer, and Broadcaster

Sky Andrew – Sports Agent (Clients include: Alex Dowsett, Sol Campbell, and Chris Robshaw.)

Aidan Mullally – EPL, Head of Business Development

Tommy Smyth – ESPN Soccer Analyst

Tom Fox – EPL, Chief Executive Officer

Tom Glick – MLS, New York City FC, President

Matt Martin – MLS Portland Timbers, Director of Domestic Scouting

Derek Bragg – Wyscout® and The Scouting Network (TSN)

Darren Eales – MLS, Atlanta United FC, President

Simon Farrant – Opta Sports

Paul Molesworth – English Football League, Chief Scout

Trevor James – MLS, Chicago Fire, Head of Scouting

John Print – SMWW Director of UK Operations and Licensed FA Player Agent

Dr. Lynn Lashbrook – SMWW President

WS_12_15

REGISTER NOW - COUPON CODE WORLDSOCCER FOR $25 OFF

USA 503-445-7105 | UK 44[0] 871 288 4799 | SMWW.COM

Keir RADNEDGE

THE INSIDER

FIFA faces uncertain future as Carrard unveils reforms

A glimmer of hope has spluttered into fragile life at FIFA. Positive reform proposals have been tabled for the extraordinary Congress on February 26. The breeze which threatens the flickering little flame is the danger that a new president will use the levers of power to extinguish that spark.

Reforming FIFA was likened by governance guru Mark Pieth, on his assignment in the summer of 2011, as trying to turn around a tanker mid-ocean: a slow, time-consuming process needing an awful lot of space.

So it is proving. Not least because the outward-bound president, Sepp Blatter, had his own ideas of which reforms he could accept and which flew a little too close to threatening his eternal grip on the organisation. Ironically, the initial reform in which Blatter took most pride was the independent ethics committee.

It appears now that he had as much understanding of the word "independent" as he has of the word "transparency".

Other ideas, such as term and age limits, Blatter drove into the long grass by telling successive Congresses that such restrictions should apply not only to FIFA but to every single one of the 209 national associations. Naturally the proposal was considered among delegates as something akin to an own goal.

Pieth's contract expired at the end of 2013 and he left a frustrated man, acknowledging the peculiar problems of trying to turn around a private organisation such as an international sports federation whose elite largely insisted of setting their own rules.

When Blatter decided to "lay down my mandate" in June it was with the proviso that he would control a new reform process and he set audit chairman Domenico Scala to work. Unfortunately for Scala, Blatter soon realised the Swiss businessman was taking the task seriously and coming up with a comprehensive roadmap to turn FIFA into a different sort of animal.

That was no use to Blatter. He needed a system which he could still influence and control, whether as a resurrected president or a puppeteer behind the new man. Hence Blatter, to Scala's anger, came up with his plan for a reform committee jammed with confederation delegates and chaired by his old IOC associate, Francois Carrard.

Scala was reduced to sniping from the sidelines while Carrard and his committee set to work. Progress, it appears, was slow and many of the members considered Scala's ideas much too radical.

Carrard had a deadline of the start of December to put his committee's recommendations to the executive committee. By mid-November it was being suggested that very little would come forth for fear that first the ExCo, and then Congress, would reject even the most modest moves.

> FIFA heads into a new year full of more uncertainty

By this time, however, the climate had changed. Blatter and Michel Platini had been suspended; the United States Department of Justice was expected to pounce on a further bunch of corruption conspirators, and FIFA's lawyers were warning legal adviser Marco Villiger and interim general-secretary Markus Kattner that without meaningful reform the legal and financial house could fall in.

Kattner knew this already. The FIFAgate scandal had frozen all negotiations with potential new sponsors. The World Cup brand remained untainted – unlike athletics, whose scandal extended to the World Championships and Olympic Games. Still, the reform proposals needed to be substantive not silly.

Hence Carrard found himself, apparently almost to his own surprise as he stared up at the transparencies set before a news conference, presenting more than anyone had expected:

- The replacement of the ExCo with a 36-member FIFA Council which will hold a supervisory and not hands-on role;
- Each confederation voting at least one woman on the council – so a minimum of six instead of the current appointed one (and one co-opted);
- Senior members to serve a maximum of three terms of four years, without an age limit;
- Council members to be chosen by direct

Deadline...
Francois Carrard

elections in Congress rather than by the confederations' own executive committees;
- Reduction of standing committees from 26 to nine, with increased participation of football stakeholders;
- Compulsory and comprehensive integrity checks for all members of FIFA's standing committees;
- Creation of a stakeholders committee to include delegates from players, clubs, leagues and sponsors; and
- Full transparency on salaries and other remunerations.

Carrard hailed the work of Scala, Pieth and also the women's task-force leader, Moya Dodd, who was picked out as "the most important woman in FIFA today".

The Australian remains "only" a co-opted member of the FIFA ExCo but her profile, work and drive on behalf of women in football has raised a very obvious question about what on earth Lydia Nsekera – the official women's football ExCo member – has been doing for the past few years?

So FIFA heads into a new year full of more uncertainty but having been handed

Important...Australia's Moya Dodd

a lifeline. Not through pressure from within, but from a rising tide of fury from without – and, of course, by the United States Department of Justice.

Just as Blatter had been delighted with the creation of the ethics committee – and then furious when it turned on him – so, back in his days as general-secretary, he had been a passionate advocate for the need to develop the grassroots and professional game in the United States.

He might one day reflect that an American passion for fair play in football ultimately proved stronger than his own.

Shifting sands for the Sheikh

Confusing times for sport powerbroker Sheikh Ahmad Al Fahad Al Sabah, who is three-way president of the Association of National Olympic Committees, of the Olympic Council of Asia and of Olympic Solidarity – as well as being a new (seven-month) member of both the executive and reform committees of FIFA.

He owns particular significance within football in view of the forthcoming FIFA presidential election in which he is a powerful supporter of AFC president Sheikh Salman bin Ebrahim Al Khalifa (the unenthusiastically viewed favourite). But all this, however, may be in jeopardy.

Sheikh Ahmad has been flying here and there, free to fulfil his duties despite Kuwait's current suspension from both world football and the Olympic movement. But he is now on bail after being sentenced to six months in jail for "insulting the judiciary" in Kuwait.

Colleagues on the FIFA ExCo have been suspended, under the ethics code, after "only" being charged with an offence. The Sheikh has a conviction registered to his name.

Maybe good for him that ethics chairman Hans-Joachim Eckert is being kept busy elsewhere.

Jeopardy...Sheikh Ahmad (left) with IOC president Thomas Bach

Arresting updates

One of the most notable features of the FIFAgate saga has been the level of arrogance effected by senior football officials. It's as if they checked in any connection with the real world with their hat and coat the moment they walked through the door at the Home of FIFA.

Of course, the presumption of innocence applies in the case of many of those arrested at the behest of the US Department of Justice, but that has already been conceded by others who have turned state's evidence.

Notable among the latter was Chuck Blazer. Like Al Capone, if the American had expended a miniscule fraction of his ill-gotten gains on someone to sort his tax affairs he might not have been vulnerable to the FBI.

Most recently Juan Angel Napout and Alfredo Hawitt, presidents of CONMEBOL and CONCACAF, were talking up their belief in honesty and transparency while simultaneously, according to the new indictment, making complex arrangements to cover up their rip-offs and bribes.

That arrogance was their downfall. They believed their bright new credentials

CBF president...Marco Polo Del Nero

Indicted...Ricardo Teixeira

rendered them safe in flying to Zurich for FIFA ExCo meetings, never mind what had happened to Jeff Webb and co in May. In the event, they were picked up in a copycat dawn raid at the Baur au Lac hotel on December 3.

Later that day they and 14 other senior football officials in Latin America were indicted by the US DoJ, including Brazil's ex-CBF president Ricardo Teixeira and current boss Marco Polo Del Nero.

Along the way, US Attorney-General Loretta Lynch noted that ex-CONCACAF president Webb had changed his plea from pretend bewildered innocence to guilty on seven counts.

Webb's name was also dragged through the mud in a corruption case in his native Cayman Islands, where his old friend and associate Canover Watson, a former member of the FIFA's audit committee, stood accused of a healthcare fraud.

All three past CONCACAF presidents are now facing trial: Warner, Webb and Hawitt. All three men have been banned from football. No wonder CONCACAF has decided to continue for the time being without a president. No-one's left, it seems.

Brian GLANVILLE

THE VOICE OF FOOTBALL

The wonder of Bournemouth and their manger Eddie Howe

After Bournemouth's dramatic 2-1 victory over waning, lopsided Manchester United, their lively young manager, Eddie Howe, proclaimed it the greatest victory in the club's history. Actually it wasn't.

Many years ago I was fortunate enough to see Bournemouth, then a Third Division club managed by Harry Redknapp – who was there to watch and applaud his old side's latest Cup triumph – knock the then formidable United out of the FA Cup 2-0.

(After that game, as I was walking away from the stadium, a figure emerged from the crowd to greet me. It was Peter McParland, at once hero and villain of the 1957 Cup Final, when, as Aston Villa's outside-left, he crashed into United keeper Ray Wood, breaking his cheekbone and forcing him off to reduce United to 10 men. There were no substitutes then and McParland proceeded to score twice and the cup was Villa's.)

Howe has worked wonders with a team he brought up to the top division for the first time in its history, making light this season of a fearful series of injuries to key players. Where would their goals come from, you wonder, when their incisive top scorer 23-year-old Callum Wilson, Coventry born and developed by Coventry City, was seriously injured early in a season which had begun so promisingly for him? Tyrone Mings, the tall young left-back bought expensively from Ipswich, hasn't yet played at all.

But Joshua King, the 23-year-old Norwegian developed then discarded, by Manchester United – where Alex Ferguson, he says, never spoke to him – has moved into the middle this season with huge success. This, after a dismal time at Borussia Monchengladbach and another bleak experience at Blackburn Rovers until he was picked up on a free transfer and regenerated at Bournemouth. Stones that the builder rejected, as the Bible says.

Shock...Bournemouth players celebrate with Junior Stanislas (far left), who scored their first goal against Manchester United

And what of Junior Stanislas, an attacking midfielder, who was arguably the best man on the field against United? Eltham born, like Bob Hope, he actually came to Bournemouth from Burnley. Harry Arter a highly effective midfielder was born in Eltham too, and he arrived from humble Woking. He played impressively against United, despite his partner having just lost their baby.

FA stance on Roy makes no sense

When Roy Hodgson some weeks ago expressed the hope that he would continue in England office after the coming European finals, the FA's chief executive, Martin Glenn, once the inspiration of Walker's Crisps of Gary Lineker association, publicly demurred. He said, logically enough, that the policy should be one of wait and see; awaiting the results of the tournament. Now he has changed his attitude and strongly suggested that Roy should stay in office anyway. Logical?

On the face of it, it looks as if England, provided they can get over Wales and even if they can't, should come through their qualifying group.

Of late, the likes of that splendid late developer, Jamie Vardy, and Tottenham's precocious 19-year-old Dele Alli, who has effortlessly made the step up from the third tier of football, have come strongly through. Theo Walcott, if he can only steer clear of injury, is eminently capable of doing damage on the right flank with his pace and control. But, alas, I feel we may have to forget about Daniel Sturridge, an obvious choice in attack when he is fit, but when will that ever be?

Gareth Bale, of course, could win any game for Wales but this hasn't been a happy season at Real Madrid although he has played his important part in Wales' qualification. This is their first-ever fair and square qualification for a major tournament having sneaked into Sweden 1958 by the back door, playing off against Israel after being eliminated, only to excel in the finals.

The belated switch of the talented Aaron Ramsey at Arsenal from exile on the right wing to the central position he craves and exploits so well should give England pause for thought. What a teenaged star he was for Cardiff in the 2008 FA Cup Final against Portsmouth as a belated substitute.

Under fire... Louis van Gaal

Coppell's words ring true

Few were more dismissive of Manchester United's predicament than Steve Coppell, who once played so successfully and with such versatility on their right wing.

After United's debacle at Bournemouth, he said: "Success in football is relatively easy. If you spend the most money, then you have the best players and the best team. If that formula breaks down then a cog has gone wrong and the cog that has gone wrong appears to be the manager.

"The philosophy that Louis Van Gaal has talked about for so long, it's difficult to distinguish what that is. The players sometimes do not really understand what he's trying to get through to them."

And Coppell pointed out that though a number of regular choices were missing through injury, "there were three senior players on the bench but a handful of untested players were given preference".

Van Gaal has hardly distinguished himself in terms of personnel. The promising striker James Wilson has been allowed to go on loan to Brighton where he is already scoring. So, to an even greater degree, is Javier Hernandez, who has 15 goals in a dozen games for a delighted Bayer Leverkusen. How United could do with the little fellow now.

Rival bosses...(from left to right) Stefan Tarkovic of Slovakia, Roy Hodgson, Leonid Slutsky of Russia and Wales' Chris Coleman

Giroud, a familiar tale at Arsenal

Just as a tactical analyst was proclaiming the death of the centre-forward, up pops 6ft 4in Olivier Giroud with a splendid hat-trick for Arsenal in Piraeus against Olympiakos, thus giving the Gunners yet another place in the knock-out rounds of the European Champions Cup. Yet looking back over the years, the story of Giroud reflects so much of Arsenal's long previous history and its various centre-forwards.

After the match, Arsene Wenger spoke with generous enthusiasm about Giroud and his accomplishments but the fact is that for some time now, his place in the team seemed in peril.

Giroud has had similar lukewarm responses in France and not long ago in the Stade de France was booed by the crowd. Go back to France's 1998 World Cup triumph and they virtually did it without a recognised, effective centre-forward. Thierry Henry, whatever his future success, was a second choice outside right.

Record holder...but Jimmy Dunne failed to cut it at Arsenal

When the illustrious Herbert Chapman managed Arsenal in those halcyon years, he was forever searching for his ideal centre-forward. The brave, straightforward Jack Lambert knocked in the goals and dashed through to score a typical second in the 1930 FA Cup Final against Huddersfield Town, Chapman's former club, but was never persona grata at Highbury.

So Chapman was forever spending on other candidates. One of them Jimmy Dunne from Sheffield United, was recently in the news when the remarkable Jamie Vardy of Leicester City came with an ace of his record of scoring in 12 games in a row in the top division. Dunne, an Irish international who had been imprisoned in the Irish civil war of the 1920s, failed to deliver at Highbury.

By a great irony, it was only shortly after Chapman had prematurely died in 1934 that the Gunners signed the centre-forward who transformed their attack. Ted Drake, in his first full season, scored no fewer than 42 goals. Later he would get all seven in a 7-1 win at Aston Villa.

● Read Brian Glanville's exclusive online column at worldsoccer.com

PRO:DIRECT

SEE THE FULL **ADIDAS GLORO** COLLECTION ONLINE - PRICES FROM **£40**

PURE CLASS

ADIDAS GLORO 16.1 COLLECTION

The Gloro returns in bold new colourways with a restyled upper, taking inspiration from the storied history of adidas Football to bring traditional boot design to the modern game.

L-R

ADIDAS GLORO 16.1 - FG: 118590 - £80

ADIDAS GLORO 16.1 - FG: 118592 - £80

ADIDAS GLORO 16.1 - FG: 118591 - £80

ADIDAS GLORO 16.1 - FG: 118589 - £80

20 stories to follow in 2016

Gavin Hamilton and Keir Radnedge highlight the key questions facing football over the next 12 months

1 IS NAPOLI COACH MAURIZIO SARRI THE NEW SACCHI?

Napoli stormed to the top of Serie A following a spectacular 2-1 defeat of Internazionale in November. Although defeat by Bologna a week later brought many Neapolitans back to earth, the feeling in the city is that, a quarter of a century on from the title wins inspired by Diego Maradona, this could be their time once more.

The famous Christmas cribs of Naples have been full of miniature reproductions of Gonzalo Higuain, Pepe Reina, Lorenzo Insigne and other heroes of the current side. One crib seller proudly unveiled a life-size wax model of coach Maurizio Sarri, generally perceived by Napoli fans as the supreme architect of the current success.

Sarri's high-pressing game is based on the Milan of Arrigo Sacchi who, he says, inspired him to take up coaching.

Sacchi returned the compliment, saying: "Sarri is a maestro, and he teaches football, so if all the club follows him things will only get better. My Milan was like that, even the kit men were giving their all."

Sarri has banned the word "*scudetto*" for now. But in one of the most open title races of recent times, his Napoli are firmly in the frame.

Making his point...Maurizio Sarri

2 WILL ZINEDINE ZIDANE GET A TOP COACHING JOB?

Having shunned a coaching career when he retired as a player, Zidane has found his coaching groove in charge of Real Madrid's B team, Castilla, where his eldest son, Enzo, is the captain.

Zidane completed his UEFA pro-coaching licence in May and is being increasingly talked about as a future boss of the Madrid first team. "He has all the qualities to be a fantastic coach: charisma, personality, experience," believes former Real leader Carlo Ancelotti. "I'm sure that he'll succeed as a manager.

Biding his time...Zinedine Zidane is coaching Madrid's B team Castilla

"Does he have the ability to do it from today? I think so. I'm even certain of it."

With current first-team boss Rafa Benitez feeling the heat after the *classico* thrashing in November, Zidane was forced to insist that he is happy to stay out of the limelight. "Things are fine at the moment," he said. "If I stay at the club it is as coach of Castilla.

"Last year, at the end of the season, I had the feeling that I still lacked something to take over the first team."

But it may not be long before he makes the step up.

3 WHERE NEXT FOR PAUL POGBA?

The Juventus midfielder is set to play a key role for hosts France at Euro 2016 and has become a central figure for reigning Italian champions Juventus.

This season, Pogba has struggled with the responsibility of wearing the number 10 shirt in Turin following the departures of Carlos Tevez, Andrea Pirlo and Arturo Vidal. Juve coach Massimiliano Allegri tried the 22-year-old in an attacking role behind the front striker, but he has now settled into a more effective, deeper midfield role where his dynamism and occasional acts of creative genius are more effective.

Pogba has a contract that ties him to the club until 2019, but that has not stopped the speculation that he will leave in the summer. *Gazzetta dello Sport* has reported a pre-contract agreement with Barcelona, while Spain's *Mundo Deportivo* has mooted a swap with Paris Saint-Germain midfielder Marco Verratti.

Deeper...Paul Pogba

A move to Barca would provide coach Luis Enrique with the dynamic box-to-box midfielder needed to develop his tactical evolution. Wherever Pogba ends up, his agent Mino Raiola is likely to be a busy man over the coming months.

Hint...Cristiano Ronaldo and Laurent Blanc

4 CRISTIANO RONALDO: STAYING PUT OR MOVING ON?

Real Madrid's no7 still has three years left on his contract and he continues to break goalscoring records like they are going out of fashion.

Ronaldo turns 31 in February but a reported rift with coach Rafa Benitez has fuelled talk that Real may have seen the best of their Portuguese superstar.

Manchester United are happy to be linked with a return for Ronaldo. Another potential destination is Paris Saint-Germain and he made a point of whispering in the ear of their coach Laurent Blanc after a Champions League tie in November.

Major League Soccer could also be a suitor – Ronaldo owns a swanky Manhattan apartment – but that would surely have to wait until the closing chapter of his career.

His agent Jorge Mendes is a master of manipulating situations in favour of his most valuable client. As a wedding gift, Ronaldo bought Mendes an entire Greek island – securing one last big payday in return would be the ultimate thank-you.

5 WILL KARIM BENZEMA PLAY AT EURO 2016?

Hosts France will start among the favourites, along with holders Spain and world champions Germany, to win Euro 2016. However, they face the prospect of being without Karim Benzema after the Real Madrid striker was suspended by the French federation in the ongoing fallout from his involvement in a controversial court case.

Benzema has been accused of being an accessory to an attempt to blackmail team-mate Mathieu Valbuena, whose position is not under threat.

Federation president Noel Le Great has said: "I would leave a door open for him, but until new evidence in his favour appears he is not available for selection.

"He is a good boy who grew up in a difficult neighbourhood and has not changed his group of friends, even though he has become a star."

Blackmail case... Karim Benzema (below right)

Campaigning for change...FIFPro president Phillipe Piat (below left) and secretary-general Theo Van Seggelen

6 WILL FIFPRO WIN ITS LEGAL CHALLENGE TO THE TRANSFER SYSTEM?

World players' union FIFPro will press forward over the next 12 months with its legal opposition to the transfer system, though what should take its place remains nebulous.

FIFA, which hardly needs trouble on any more fronts, has been targeted by FIFPro whose French president, Philippe Piat, complains the system contravenes human rights and European law.

The system, as it works now, was refined in negotiations between the European Commission (EC) and FIFA in the wake of the Bosman verdict of December 1995 which threw open Europe's football borders.

FIFPro, which represents 65,000 players, claims the system infringes European law because it fails to deliver contractual stability and is to blame for an imbalance of competition, third-party ownership of players and the trafficking of minors.

Piat says: "The EC should have ensured that all the original rules were respected but this has not been the case. We want to ensure all this is modified. We have great concerns about the financial bubble which could burst soon in the transfer system.

"There is no solidarity between clubs. Often they say the transfer system is necessary because the money of the rich will filter down but that is not the case.

"Some 67 per cent of the money paid in transfer fees by large clubs goes back to just a few at the top so the money stays among the elite and only a small amount filters down to the little clubs.

"Some stars are incredibly wealthy but in small clubs and small countries there is almost slavery...FIFPro would like to make the system much more equable."

One of FIFPro's greatest concerns is the failure of many clubs to pay players on time. FIFPro complains this makes players, particularly in smaller and lower leagues, vulnerable to temptation from match fixers.

Secretary-general Theo van Seggelen says: "Players, especially young players, need more protection.

"We also feel it should be a fundamental right of players to receive their salaries. We have tried in good faith to reach a solution within the football family but now we have no choice but to go to the EC."

For much of last year Karl-Heinz Rummenigge, chairman of the 200-strong European Club Association, appealed to FIFPro to engage in further discussions through the European football strategy council set up by UEFA. Ultimately FIFPro considered this merely a stalling tactic.

Unlike Piat, Van Seggelen denies FIFPro is intent on scrapping the transfer system altogether. He says: "We just want to bring balance between the rights of players and the clubs."

He and his boss may need a serious one-to-one talk before they get into court.

Silver... Oscar (left) and Neymar in 2012

7 CAN BRAZIL WIN GOLD AT THE RIO OLYMPICS?

The Olympic football tournament is the one global title to elude Brazil. Three years ago, in London, they lost to Mexico in the Final, but on home soil, and led by captain Neymar, they will hope to finally go one better.

The men's and women's competitions take place from August 3-20 in seven venues across the country: Belo Horizonte, Brasilia, Manaus, Rio de Janeiro (Maracana and Olympic stadium), Salvador and Sao Paulo (Corinthians).

Six of the seven stadia were used at the 2014 World Cup – the exception being Rio's Estadio Olimpico Joao Havelange, the home of Botafogo, which will also host athletics events. The Maracana will host the men's and women's Finals.

In addition to hosts Brazil, the men's competition will feature Algeria, Nigeria, South Africa, three Asian teams (to be decided in January), Honduras, Mexico, Argentina, Fiji, Denmark, Germany, Portugal, Sweden and either Colombia or USA (who meet in a play-off in March).

The involvement of Portugal and Sweden, who qualified by reaching the last four of the 2015 European Under-21 championship, raises the possibility of Cristiano Ronaldo and Zlatan Ibrahimovic taking part as overage players. Lionel Messi and Sergio Aguero could also compete for Argentina.

Tribunal...Eva Carneiro is claiming unfair dismissal

8 CAN CHELSEA AVOID AN EMBARRASSING PUBLIC ROW WITH EVA CARNEIRO?

Chelsea's troubles this season can be traced back to the moment that club doctor Eva Carneiro ran on to the Stamford Bridge pitch, along with the head physio, to treat the injured Eden Hazard as Chelsea chased a late winner against Swansea City. The match ended 2-2 and then-Blues manager Jose Mourinho was furious with the pair, branding Carneiro "impulsive and naive" for holding up play.

Carneiro is now claiming for constructive dismissal against the English champions – and has been backed by many senior figures within the game, including FIFA's medical chief Michel D'Hooghe.

The former club doctor's case is to be heard by an employment tribunal in the new year and could heap further embarrassment on Chelsea at a difficult time for the club. Unless, of course, the club reach a private agreement with Carneiro before the hearing...

Investigation...Real (in white) and Atletico could face sanctions

9 WILL REAL AND ATLETICO MADRID BE HIT BY TRANSFER BANS?

In a recent interview with Spanish newspaper *Mundo Deportivo,* suspended FIFA president Sepp Blatter let slip that both Atletico Madrid and city rivals Real have been investigated for similar irregularities to those that led to Barcelona's transfer ban.

Blatter claimed that FIFA's disciplinary committee has already concluded the probes, though he did not know their outcome. He revealed: "FIFA's disciplinary committee has opened separate proceedings on Real Madrid and Atletico Madrid for the same infractions committed by FC Barcelona.

"They have been concluded, but I don't know what the sanctions are because they are independent commissions and I'm suspended, I can't even walk inside FIFA."

If both teams are found guilty of the same irregularities as Barca, regarding the hiring of underage players, they are likely to face sanctions similar to Barcelona's one-year ban on signing new players..

"If Barcelona were penalised for violating FIFA's regulations, and the Madrid clubs committed identical irregularities, it would be normal to punish them the same way," added Blatter.

10 HOW LONG WILL GARY NEVILLE STAY AT VALENCIA?

The move by Valencia to hire Gary Neville, assisted by his younger brother Phil, was one of the surprise appointments of 2015.

Since retiring as a player in 2011, Neville senior has thrived as a TV pundit, while dipping his toes in the coaching waters as an assistant to England boss Roy Hodgson. He also seemed to give the impression that club management was not for him.

Aside from the linguistic and cultural challenges that he now faces in Spain, Neville has taken over from Portuguese coach Nuno Espirito Santo at a club where instability has been the watchword for a number of years. Valencia have had no less than 15 head coaches in as many years, while under their latest owner, Peter Lim, there have been accusations that agent Jorge Mendes has held undue influence over transfer policy.

Neville and Singapore businessman Lim are business partners in a Manchester hotel venture, as well as the co-owners of non-league Salford City, where the Nevilles' former Manchester United team-mates Nicky Butt, Paul Scholes and Ryan Giggs are also involved. Their relationship could be tested if results do not go Neville's way.

Surprise...Gary Neville

Neville has talked about having a five-year mentality, acting as a long-term strategist rather than a short-term firefighter. He must also cope with a dissenting view held by many in Valencia that Voro, the caretaker coach who took charge in the aftermath of Nuno's departure, should have been given until the end of the season.

11 WHO WILL LEAD UEFA AFTER PLATINI ?

Once upon a time it all appeared so straightforward. It was almost pre-ordained that, in the spring of 2016, Michel Platini would move smoothly over to become president of FIFA and some bright, ambitious new kid on the European block – Germany's Wolfgang Niersbach, for example – would step up as new head of UEFA.

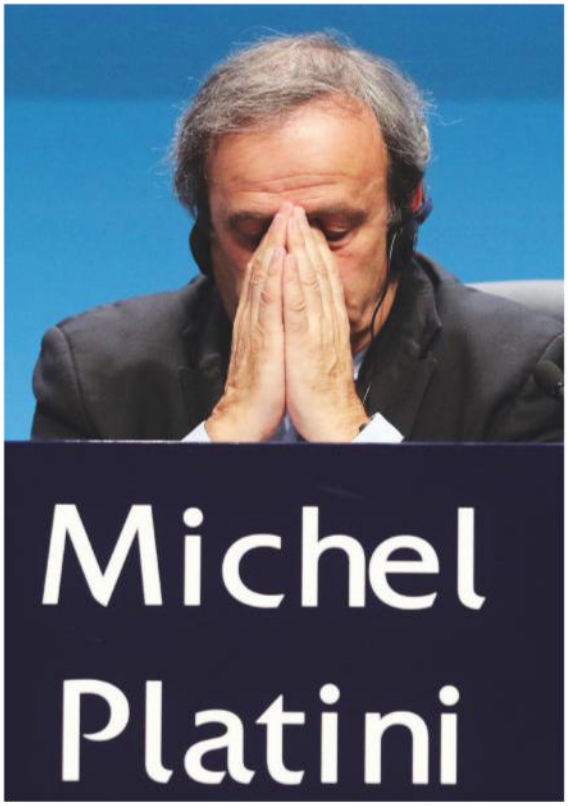
But this is where the old adage "if it looks too good to be true it probably is" comes into play.

On October 8, Platini was effectively thrown off course by a 90-day suspension from the FIFA ethics committee over allegations of misconduct in office. Eight days later, German news magazine *Der Spiegel* blew open the World Cup slush fund allegation which, ultimately, led to Niersbach's resignation as DFB president.

Although Niersbach has continued as a member of the FIFA and UEFA executive committees, in the present climate – and after accepting "political responsibility" for the 2006 cash mystery – it is inconceivable that he can progress any further up the ladder of power.

Not that he is the only high-profile member on both committees who is damaged goods. In November, Spanish FEF veteran Angel Maria Villar, UEFA's first vice-president and a long-time FIFA VP, was fined SFr25,000 and cautioned for initially refusing to co-operate with the 2018-2022 World Cup inquiry.

Adding to the confusion now facing UEFA its general secretary Gianni Infantino – the "Mr Reliable" who has put all Platini's proposals into practice – might soon be on his way, too. Either to become president of FIFA or its new secretary-general.



Disaster...it has all fallen apart for the UEFA president

Hence, on the eve of the Euro 2016 draw in Paris, UEFA began to shift the pieces on the political chessboard so that, if necessary, it can put a new president in place just in time for the finals in June.

An extraordinary Congress has been summoned for February 25, on the eve of the election to choose a new FIFA president. Then the ordinary Congress, set for March in Budapest, has been postponed until May 3, also in the Hungarian capital.

By delaying the ordinary Congress, UEFA can ensure all its statutes and agenda are in legal order for the likely presidential election on May 3. But it will need that extraordinary Congress on February 25 to approve the change of statutes to adjust the timings.

Of course, Platini hopes to clear his name in time to stand in the FIFA election and Infantino's candidacy depends on the outcome. But the Frenchman is running out of both time and options.

Going places...Gianni Infantino

So to whom might UEFA turn to take the European federation forward? Well, that's not easy to predict.

Holland's Michael Van Praag, who took a shot at the FIFA presidency in 2015, might be a solid one-term caretaker while crisis at the head of the world game is resolved. England's David Gill is another name that will be canvassed, out of respect for his understanding of the club game from his leadership of Manchester United.

But predicting anything in the current maelstrom remains a dangerous business.

12 WILL DAVID BECKHAM'S MIAMI PROJECT LAND AN MLS FRANCHISE?

Major League Soccer's expansion continues. Atlanta United, Los Angeles FC, Minnesota United and David Beckham's Miami Beckham United group are all set to join MLS before 2020.

Atlanta will join in 2017, followed by LAFC (2018) and Minnesota (2019).

Beckham's Miami project are still waiting for confirmation of their stadium plans – and MLS boss Don Garber recently hinted that Miami could be overtaken by Sacramento Republic if Miami's stadium plans fall through.

"Expansion decisions are decisions you live with for a lifetime," Garber said. "We want to get it right. We believe in the market and if we can't get it right, then we'll move on. David knows that, the city leaders know that and the MLS owners are obviously well aware of that."

Dream...David Beckham hopes to bring MLS to Miami

13 WHERE NEXT FOR JOSE MOURINHO?

Jose Mourinho turns 53 on January 26. He is older than Pep Guardiola (44), Jurgen Klopp (48) and Laurent Blanc (50), but younger than Rafa Benitez (55), Carlo Ancelotti (56) and Louis Van Gaal (64). He is still in the prime of his coaching life but after his sacking by Chelsea, the future options are narrowing.

Mourinho's departure from Stamford Bridge was inevitable after an extraordinary collapse in form this season. By mid-December Chelsea had lost to nine different league opponents: the same number as in the whole of his first spell at the club. When Chelsea stormed their way to last season's Premier League title, they lost just three times during the campaign.

The same players who had walked through walls for their manager just months earlier turned against his extreme demands, with player power prompting technical director Michael Emenalo to talk of "palpable discord" in the dressing room.

Mourinho is by no means damaged goods, but his second sacking by Chelsea has confirmed his reputation as a manager who quickly builds winning sides which implode by his third season in charge.

The bookies, albeit British ones, installed Mourinho as the favourite to succeed Benitez at former club Real Madrid. Such a move appears unlikely, given his toxic relationship with president Florentino Perez. Similarly, Bayern Munich, where Ancelotti is tipped to succeed Guardiola, looks out of bounds.

In the past, Mourinho has entertained ambitions to manage Manchester United, but the Old Trafford hierarchy preferred the safer option, endorsed by Alex Ferguson, of appointing David Moyes in 2013.

A more likely destination would be Paris Saint-Germain. Mourinho went out of his way to be complimentary about PSG when facing them in the Champions League last season. The Qatar-owned club's ambitions lie in the European sphere, having won the French title for the past four seasons. That would suit Mourinho's preferred template of taking on a club that requires cosmetic rather than major surgery.

Ironically, PSG face Chelsea in the last 16 of the Champions League in February.

In the meantime, a sabbatical of sorts awaits for Mourinho, who is expected to remain in London while his children complete their education. Under the terms of his departure from Chelsea, he will continue to receive his £13million-a-year salary until he takes another job.

He still has a lucrative contract with BT Sport, so a spell as a pundit may quench his short-term thirst for the spotlight. Either way, he is unlikely to stay quiet for long.

Sabbatical?... Jose Mourinho

Controversial...GLT would have allowed this England goal against Germany at the 2010 World Cup

14 WILL THERE BE GOALLINE TECHNOLOGY AT EURO 2016?

With suspended president Michel Platini absent from its meeting ahead of the Euro 2016 draw, UEFA's executive committee opted to consider a proposal to introduce GLT, possibly in time for the summer's Euro finals in France.

"This has been on the table for quite some time," said general-secretary Gianni Infantino. "If it happens for Euro 2016 it will also happen for the club competitions for next season. "The final decision will be made in January but the executive committee was pretty positive in its mindset."

Platini has been one of the most notable opponents of GLT, preferring instead to push his preferred "additional assistant referees" behind each goal. But while the cat's away...

15 WHAT WILL CHINA BUY NEXT?

The recent deal to sell a 13 per cent stake in Manchester City for $400million (£256m) to state-backed China Media Capital Holdings (CMC) and CITIC Capital brought the Chinese government's plans sharply into focus.

City fan...Xi Jinping

For City, the deal opens up commercial opportunities in a huge new market. For the Chinese, it marked the latest stage in a plan that could culminate in hosting the 2026 World Cup.

State president Xi Jinping has taken an active interest in making the underperforming national team more competitive. During a visit to Britain in late October, he visited City's state-of-the-art academy in Manchester.

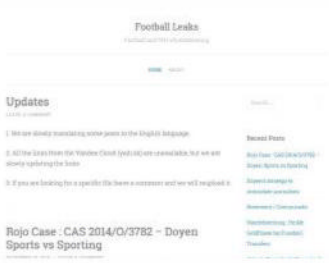
Chinese companies are being encouraged in invest in overseas clubs. Model-car maker Rastar Group recently announced it was taking an 80 per cent stake in Spain's Espanyol, while real-estate firm Dalian Wanda snapped up 20 per cent of Atletico Madrid in January 2015.

16 WHO WILL BE NEXT TO BE EXPOSED BY THE FOOTBALL LEAKS WEBSITE?

The *Football Leaks* website sprung up in 2015 and has operated under a number of different url's. It has specialised in publishing transfer documents, mostly from Portuguese clubs, with the intention of exposing the practice of Third Party Ownership, which is now banned by FIFA.

Twente have been banned from European competition (see page 10) as a direct result of documents published by Football Leaks.

Other documents revealed how much Monaco paid Atletico Madrid for Radamel Falcao, a client of Portuguese agent Jorge Mendes, as well as a host of contracts between players and Sporting Lisbon.



Exposed...the website

Centenary...the Copa America began in 1916

17 HOW STRONG WILL THE TEAMS BE AT THE CENTENNIAL COPA AMERICA?

The Centennial Copa America, is set to go ahead in the USA between June 3 and 26.

Jointly organised by CONCACAF and CONMEBOL, it will be an expanded version of the Copa America, which was first played in 1916. It will feature 10 teams from CONMEBOL and six teams from CONCACAF.

It is set to go ahead despite the corruption crisis that has engulfed both confederations. The most recent presidents of both bodies – CONMEBOL's Juan Angel Napout and Alfredo Hawitt of CONCACAF – were both arrested in Zurich in early December as part of the latest round of FBI indictments.

It remains to be seen whether South America's leading players will take part.

Neymar is set to lead Brazil's bid for Olympic gold, and could be involved with Barcelona team-mates Lionel Messi and Luis Suarez in the Champions League Final on May 28.

18 WILL THE EUROPA LEAGUE BE A BETTER COMPETITION THAN THE CHAMPIONS LEAGUE?

The knockout stage of this season's Europa League (draw, page 91) will feature a number of former European champions: Manchester United, Liverpool, Porto and Borussia Dortmund, as well as Valencia, Fiorentina, Napoli, Tottenham Hotspur and holders Sevilla.

There is also the added incentive, for the first time, that the winner will qualify for the 2016-17 Champions League.

In contrast, participants in the last 16 of the Champions League included Gent, PSV, Dynamo Kiev, Benfica and relegation-threatened Chelsea.

Glory...Sevilla lift last season's Europa League

Moving up... Rangers (in blue)

19 WILL RANGERS RETURN TO A 16-TEAM SCOTTISH TOP FLIGHT?

Celtic and Rangers will revive their league rivalry next season if Rangers can continue their form under manager Mark Warburton, who joined from Brentford last summer.

Warburton has joined the debate on whether the Scottish Premier League should be expanded to 16 teams. "The gap between the top of the Championship and Premiership is not the same as down south," he said.

"Up here, the gap is much narrower and you can afford to have a very competitive 16-team league.

"Is short-termism and self-interest is holding the game back? I would say yes. That's my opinion. I'm kept being told about the financial climate but I think sometimes it is about short-term pain for some long-term gain."

20 Who will win Euro 2016?

Group A

Albania | France | Romania | Switzerland

June 10 France v Romania (Paris Stade de France, 9pm)
June 11 Albania v Switzerland (Lens, 3pm)
June 15 Romania v Switzerland (Paris Parc des Princes, 6pm)
June 15 France v Albania (Marseille, 9pm)
June 19 Switzerland v France (Lille, 9pm)
June 19 Romania v Albania (Lyon, 9pm)

Group B

England | Russia | Slovakia | Wales

June 11 Wales v Slovakia (Bordeaux, 6pm)
June 11 England v Russia (Marseille, 9pm)
June 15 Russia v Slovakia (Lille, 3pm)
June 16 England v Wales (Lens, 3pm)
June 20 Slovakia v England (Saint-Etienne, 9pm)
June 20 Russia v Wales (Toulouse, 9pm)

Group C

Germany | Northern Ireland | Poland | Ukraine

June 12 Poland v Northern Ireland (Nice, 6pm)
June 12 Germany v Ukraine (Lille, 9pm)
June 16 Ukraine v Northern Ireland (Lyon, 6pm)
June 16 Germany v Poland (Paris Stade de France, 9pm)
June 21 Northern Ireland v Germany (Paris Parc des Princes, 6pm)
June 21 Ukraine v Poland (Marseille, 6pm)

Group D

Croatia | Czech Rep | Spain | Turkey

June 12 Turkey v Croatia (Paris Parc des Princes, 3pm)
June13 Spain v Czech Rep (Toulouse, 3pm)
June 17 Czech Rep v Croatia (Saint-Etienne, 6pm)
June 17 Spain v Turkey (Nice, 9pm)
June 21 Croatia v Spain (Bordeaux, 9pm)
June 21 Czech Rep v Turkey (Lens, 9pm)

Group E

Belgium | Italy | Rep Ireland | Sweden

June 13 Rep Ireland v Sweden (Paris Stade de France, 6pm)
June 13 Belgium v Italy (Lyon, 9pm)
June 17 Italy v Sweden (Toulouse, 3pm)
June 18 Belgium v Rep Ireland (Bordeaux, 3pm)
June 22 Sweden v Belgium (Nice, 9pm)
June 22 Italy v Rep Ireland (Lille, 9pm)

Group F

Austria | Hungary | Iceland | Portugal

June 14 Austria v Hungary (Bordeaux, 6pm)
June 14 Portugal v Iceland (Saint-Etienne, 9pm)
June 18 Iceland v Hungary (Marseille, 6pm)
June 18 Portugal v Austria (Paris Parc des Princes, 9pm)
June 22 Iceland v Austria (Paris Stade de France, 6pm)
June 22 Hungary v Portugal (Lyon, 6pm)

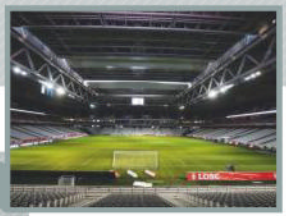
(* *all kick-offs are local time*)

● Lens Stade Bollaert-Delelis (38,223)

● Paris Parc des Princes (47,000)

● Bordeaux Nouveau Stade de Bordeaux (42,115)

● Toulouse Stadium Municipal (33,300)


● Lille Stade Pierre-Mauroy (50,186)

The knockout phase

● Paris Stade de France (81,338)

● Lyon Stade des LumiEres (59,286)

● Saint-Etienne Stade Geoffroy-Guichard (41,965)

● Marseille Stade VElodrome (67,394)

Round of 16

June 25
Saint-Etienne 3pm
Runner-up Group A
v
Runner-up Group C

June 25
Lens 9pm
Winner Group D
v
3rd best Group B/E/F

June 25
Paris Parc des Princes, 6pm
Winner Group B
v
3rd best Group A/C/D

June 26
Toulouse 9pm
Winner Group F
v
Runner-up Group E

June 26
Lille, 6pm
Winner Group C
v
3rd best Group A/B/F

June 27
Paris Stade de France, 6pm
Winner Group E
v
Runner-up Group D

June 26
Lyon, 3pm
Winner Group A
v
3rd best Group C/D/E

June 27
Nice, 9pm
Runner-up Group B
v
Runner-up Group F

Quarter-finals

June 30
Marseille, 9pm

July 1
Lille, 9pm

July 2
Bordeaux, 9pm

July 3
Paris Stade de France, 9pm

Semi-finals

July 6
Lyon, 9pm

July 7
Marseille, 9pm

Final

July 10
Paris Stade de France, 9pm

● Nice Allianz Riviera (35,624)

Lovell soccer

www.lovellsoccer.co.uk

MercurialX Proximo TF

Product code: 31679

£124.99

MagistaX Proximo TF

Product code: 31684

£124.99

HypervenomX Proximo TF

Product code: 31649

£124.99

Nike Football X Collection

Combining their boot technology with design elements unique to small-sided football. There's Hypervenom for the attackers, Magista for the playmakers and Mercurial for the speed merchants. Each silo has been given the metallic treatment as part of the FootballX Liquid Chrome Pack.

FREE iD **FREE Football Boot Personalisation**

FREE delivery on orders over £100

Lovell Soccer

HypervenomX Proximo IC
Product code: 31650
£124.99

MagistaX Proximo IC
Product code: 32148
£124.99

MercurialX Proximo IC
Product code: 31678
£124.99

What is FREE iD?

Lovell Soccer is the only place to offer totally free boot personalisation across our entire range. You can add anything you like as long as it fits. Whether adding your name, nickname, or anything else to your boots, make them your own at Lovell Soccer.

facebook.com/lovellsoccer twitter.com/lovellsoccer Instagram.com/lovellsoccer

eyewitness

Joel Richards reports from Buenos Aires

ARGENTINA

Domestic double for Boca

The return of Carlos Tevez proves an inspiration

It was Alberto Armando, whose two spells as Boca Juniors president spanned from 1954 to 1980, who coined the phrase "half plus one". Half the country, and then some, supported his club, he joked at River Plate's expense, claiming that Boca were the most popular team in the land.

In 2015, Mauricio Macri took the maxim of "half plus one" a step further.

Macri moved into politics on the back of a hugely successful spell as Boca president. After two terms of office as Buenos Aires city mayor – which he once said was infinitely easier than being the Boca president – the son of a millionaire businessman won 51 per cent of the

Ruling the roost...Carlos Tevez, back at his home city club, perches on the goal frame to take the fans' acclaim after Boca Juniors clinch the league title

vote to become president of Argentina. The election results even gave the political map of the country the look of a Boca shirt; the blue of the outgoing Victory Front won in the north and south, while the yellow of Macri's Let's Change coalition took the central strip of the country.

As well as the presidency, Macri's party retained Buenos Aires city and won the populous and important Buenos Aires province in remarkable fashion. And his stunning political success was matched by his former club, on and off the field.

In the year that the convoluted 30-team league that was dreamt up by the late AFA president Julio Grondona came into being, Boca Juniors won a league and cup double.

They had strengthened impressively for the campaign, outspending the competition to bring in Uruguayan

My club...Mauricio Macri (centre) watches Boca

playmaker Nicolas Lodeiro from Corinthians and defender Gino Peruzzi from Catania at the start of the year. But it was the signing of Carlos Tevez midway through the season that was the filip for the title run-in. Top scorer in Boca's cup run, his domestic double was his second of the year, having already won Serie A and the Italian Cup with Juventus.

Tevez linked up with the club's top scorer Jonathan Calleri in attack, while Pablo Perez and Lodeiro were vital in a midfield that was deprived of the perennially injured Fernando Gago. And although they lost more games than their four closest rivals, crucially Boca won more than anyone else.

The arrival of Tevez, back at his home city club, provided a much-needed boost after the controversial Libertadores Cup defeat by River Plate when the match was suspended after a pepper-spray attack on visiting players at the Bombonera. *Los Millonarios* went on to win the Libertadores and crown an astonishing 18 months of winning titles, but they slumped badly in the league as their focus shifted to December's Club World Cup in Japan. In the end, Marcelo Gallardo's side finished ninth, 15 points behind Boca.

Other traditional grandes fared well during 2015. Edgardo Bauza, who led

Day of triumph...Macri, his wife Julia (right) and vice-president Gabriela Michetti celebrate victory in the Argentinian general election

Rivals...Argentina FA presidential candidates Luis Segura (left) and Marcelo Tinelli face a re-run

> "They took the Final from us, we didn't lose this"
> **Rosario Central coach Eduardo Coudet after losing to Boca in the cup**

San Lorenzo to the club's first Libertadores Cup in 2014, took them to second place before stepping down. Diego Cocca, Racing's coach who in 2014 led the "Academy" to their first league title win in decades, also stepped down after ensuring qualification for the Libertadores in 2016. Gabriel Milito and Guillermo Barros Schelotto joined the list of departing coaches, having qualified Estudiantes and Lanus respectively for the Sudamericana Cup.

At the other end of the table, Crucero del Norte faced the ignominy of finishing a league campaign in 30th place. Arsenal de Sarandi, the club Grondona had founded in 1957, finished 28th. Velez Sarsfield – who claim the "sixth grande" title after their success in the 1990s – finished 27th.

Rosario Central, meanwhile, were highly impressive. Eduardo Coudet's side played attractive football and, with the goals of Marco Ruben, the league's top scorer with 21, they challenged for the title until the penultimate round, ending in third place.

They also reached the Cup Final, but the game will be remembered in Rosario for being marred by refereeing decisions.

"They took the Final from us, we didn't lose this," a furious Coudet said afterwards, having been sent off himself for protesting after an early goal for his side had been disallowed. The referee, Diego Ceballos, who said he later received death threats, awarded a penalty to Boca Juniors for a foul well outside the Central area, which Lodeiro converted. Andres Chavez made it 2-0 with a goal from an offside position.

In a year when the country, the AFA and Boca all voted in new presidents, the return of Tevez to the Bombonera was in itself highly politicised. Banners outside the stadium on the day of his presentation did not read "Thank you Carlos", but rather "Thank You Tano" in reference to Daniel Angelici, the Boca Juniors president, who leads the club political organisation founded by Macri.

On the back of the league and cup double, not to mention repatriating Tevez, Angelici won the Boca presidential elections in early December. However, major and controversial changes could be ahead for the club as Angelici has long been studying options to build a new stadium and leave the Bombonera owing to its lower capacity.

During his time as club president, Macri saw Boca win 17 trophies – including six league titles, four Libertadores Cups and two Intercontinental Trophies – and during a short presentation at the Bombonera after winning the national elections he said: "We made this club grow infinitely."

Grand plans...Boca president Daniel Angelici

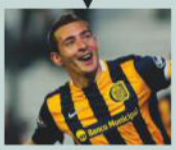
Now he says he hopes to do the same for the country. He will also have a hand in how Argentinian football reorganises, as the government he now leads is the television rights holder. But first, the Argentinian FA needs a new president.

The elections, on December 3, failed to produce a winner. The choice for the 75 club representatives was between Luis Segura, the former Argentinos Juniors president who replaced Julio Grondona, and the younger Marcelo Tinelli, a TV showman and San Lorenzo's vice-president. Like the national elections, the choice was over continuity with Segura or a more modern approach under Tinelli.

Bizarrely, even though 75 people voted, the count somehow ended 38-38, with nobody admitting to having voted twice.

Not surprisingly, one of the proposed dates for the re-run is December 28 – which in Argentina is Fools' Day. WS

Best of season



PLAYER
MARCO RUBEN
(Rosario Central)
Back at the club he supports after spells abroad, his versatility in attack, link-up play and goalscoring led to a call-up to the national team.

COACH
RODOLFO ARRUABARRENA
(Boca Juniors)
Though arch-rivals River Plate took the top prize on the continent, Boca dominated the domestic game, winning a league and cup double.

NEWCOMER
JONATHAN CALLERI
(Boca Juniors)
Linking up well with Carlos Tevez, the forward shone for Boca and a move to Europe, plus a call-up to the national team, are both expected sooner rather than later.

Crowd pleasers...Rosario Central (stripes) played some of the best football in the top flight

eyewitness

Carl Worswick reports

COLOMBIA

The success of failure

Club owner cashes in on team's demise

With a thumb pointing to the sky and a grin spreading across his face, Cucuta Deportivo skipper Gustavo Bolivar did little to disguise his delight. Soaking up the moment for the cameras, he winked before shooting off down the tunnel.

"I don't know what I was thinking," the former Colombian international midfielder later told a local newspaper. "But everybody knows I'm a happy person. That's just the way I am."

It was, indeed, a peculiar and imprudent reaction – as just moments earlier his team had been relegated and the 2007 Libertadores Cup semi-finalists were off to the second tier.

After the 30-year-old's smile was splashed across newspapers the following day, social media howled with rage and he was warned to watch his back.

Yet for many, the club's captain wasn't the real villain in a season to forget for Cucuta; the real anger was reserved for club owner Jose Augusto Cadena.

A local man, Cadena made his fortune from paper before turning to football in 2006 when buying Atletico Bucaramanga. "I was only 28 years old and knew nothing about how a football team worked," he admits. "But I had the chance to buy my own team and went for it."

A success-starved team struggling at the wrong end of the table, with a big potential fan base, but hampered by a chronic lack of investment, the club would fit snugly with Cadena's business strategy. Hope had long gone at Bucaramanga and, initially, the new owner sought to restore it. But two years later they were relegated to the second division. Cadena had fought with players and coaches, sold the club's biggest stars and left the youth team to fulfil league fixtures.

"Players were often kicked out of their hotel because the club had ran up so many debts," says local journalist Felipe Zaruk. "Cadena owed money to everyone."

Cadena was eventually forced to sell up, but when doing so in 2012 he received almost seven times the sum he had originally paid. And the "success of failure" strategy didn't end there.

Later that year he became president of promoted Patriotas after a transparency law had forced the club from Tunja to become a PLC. Cadena acquired 46 per cent of the club for £368,000 and once again he promised to rekindle supporters' dreams. But instead of a return to winning ways, the players threatened to strike over unpaid wages as the debts mounted.

"If Cadena leaves Patriotas it will benefit the team," said the club's coach, Julio Comesana. "We need to get rid of all those taking advantage of our sport."

Cadena's asset-stripping project at Patriotas was derailed in 2013 after the local council – who had been the previous majority shareholder – exerted heavy pressure and investigations were opened on how Cadena had acquired the club. Once again, the businessman sold his share for a higher price.

And by the end of the same year Cadena had his eyes on a new prize: Cucuta Deportivo.

With the 2006 Colombian champions in the second division and on the verge of bankruptcy, Cadena claimed he would turn things around. With money worries initially eased, the team finished the 2014 season in sixth place, but were then eliminated in the promotion play-offs by Llaneros.

Salvation arrived, however, via a tweak in the rules when league organisers DIMAYOR announced an impromptu promotion tournament to inject new life into the top division. They offered two golden tickets to "historic" clubs who had fallen on hard times as part of a newly expanded 20-club top-flight and Cucuta got lucky, winning promotion with a handball goal from Paraguayan striker Mario Lazaga.

Back in the Primera A, Cucuta attracted 42,000 fans for their opening game against Junior in February 2015. In an encouraging start they won 1-0, but behind the scenes Cadena was already making enemies.

In March, coach Alberto Suarez was sacked after just eight games, while Lazaga and star midfielder Franco Sosa mysteriously left the club.

In came unknown Argentinian coach

PHOTO: JOSE CAMILO GIRALDO OVALLOS

Proud...Cucuta Deportivo take to the field

PHOTO: JOSE CAMILO GIRALDO OVALLOS

High hopes...Cucuta Deportivo fans feel they have been let down by Cadena

Marcelo Fuentes, but he lasted less than two months before being replaced by Flavio Torres, who also failed to see the year out.

Cadena's strategy of maintaining the club in permanent turmoil was a deliberate attempt to achieve his ultimate objective: relegation back to the second division.

Following accusations from city mayor Donamaris Ramirez-Paris Lobo that Cadena had "cheated" the city and "didn't deserve to be involved in football", the businessman responded to this "lack of local political support" by threatening to pull his team out of the city and set up elsewhere. Despite opposition from the club's fans, DIMAYOR approved the move at its November meeting.

"Football is and must be a business," Cadena once explained to Colombian newspaper *El Tiempo*. It was hardly an unusual philosophy for the modern game, but this maxim had an added dimension.

> "Football is and must be a business"
> **Cucuta Deportivo owner, Jose Augusto Cadena**

Club owner...Jose Augusto Cadena

Due to the way TV money is divided between Colombia's 36 pro clubs, there is a financial incentive for unscrupulous owners to fail. This is because the clubs are divided into two camps: with 23 "historic" teams that take 90 per cent of the television pot and 13 Category B sides who receive the other 10 per cent.

Under DIMAYOR's definition, an historic team is one that at some point has served three years in the top flight. This means that sides such as Cucuta can slip into the second tier but continue to claim the same slice of television cash as leading clubs Millonarios and Atletico Nacional.

So, although TV revenue remains untouched, player wages and other second-division costs go down, creating a perverse format that is open to abuse.

While Cadena is perhaps the most egregious and skilled architect of exploiting team failure for private profit, he's not the only owner to have benefitted through a lack of success on the pitch. Four-times Copa Libertadores runners-up America de Cali, for example, are another case in point. Relegated in 2011, they still languish in the second tier five years later, with fans long pointing the finger at club owners for constructing a policy of avoiding promotion at all costs.

Unless the football authorities in Colombia implement some sort of control and fans are given a voice, Cucuta could face a similar future. WS

eyewitness

Brian Homewood reports from Yokohama

JAPAN

Artists v workmen

Barcelona claim world title as South American players dominate

Support...River fans flocked to the Dotonbori canal in Osaka before their semi-final

"It's quite normal for any big team to lose 3-0 to Barcelona," said coach Luiz Felipe Scolari after Guangzhou Evergrande's Club World Cup semi-final defeat. "At least we didn't lose 4-0 like Real Madrid."

It was an interesting point. Barcelona's comprehensive win, and the way in which they effortlessly stroked the ball about for much of the second half, provided plenty of fodder for those who argue that this competition is a waste of time.

Another 3-0 win over River Plate in the Final provided yet another opportunity to deride the contest. But, by the same argument, there is little point in playing La Liga and the Champions League group stage where Barcelona are also on a different planet to their rivals.

On the same day that Barca were winning the world title for the third time, Real Madrid thrashed Rayo Vallecano 10-2 back home, but nobody was calling for La Liga to be scrapped.

The problem is not the Club World Cup competition itself – the idea of bringing together the champions of the six continents is perfectly valid and logical – but rather the dynamics of modern football in which the rest of the world has become a feeder for Europe.

One result of this means that the best South Americans play against, rather than for, the teams from their continent.

Barcelona's match against River Plate was not so much Europe versus South America as a case of South America's artists, playing for Barcelona, against their workmen, playing for River Plate.

There were 17 South Americans on the pitch: six world-class internationals playing for Barcelona and 11 league players for River Plate.

Until around the mid-1990s, when the old Intercontinental Cup was played, the European and South American teams met more or less on level terms.

> "For the history of Argentinian football and our institution, this is one of the most important games"
> **River Plate coach Marcelo Gallardo on playing Barcelona**

The talent drain from South America had begun but not to today's extent, where many players move to Europe without playing a single professional game in their own country.

Nowadays, South American teams see the competition as a chance to pull off a huge giant-killing act but, if anything, they seem to take it more seriously than before.

An estimated 15,000 River Plate fans made the journey to Tokyo, turning the Nagai and then the Yokohama stadiums into a mini-Monumental.

"We are here because we are going to measure ourselves with one of the best teams in the world," said River coach Marcelo Gallardo.

And River's line-up was a fair reflection of the status quo.

The side that carried the hopes of a travelling army of supporters against the finest that Europe had to offer, was little more than a bunch of journeymen, albeit one that was brilliantly moulded together by Gallardo.

River's players had only a smattering of international caps between them, mostly in low-key friendlies, and the only one of

them to currently feature regularly for his country was midfielder Carlos Sanchez who has broken into the Uruguay side at the age of 30.

Although most of their players have had spells abroad, it has mainly been far from the glamour of the big European leagues. Defender Jonathan Maidana, for example, spent two seasons with Metalist Kharkiv, while midfielder Leonardo Pisculichi spent five seasons in Qatar with Al Arabi.

Rodrigo Mora, River's most expensive signing at €3.5million, was signed by Benfica but played only one match.

The side included two young players who have not yet made the trip to Europe in Matias Kravenitter, who has how joined Atletico Madrid, and their very promising ▸

In charge...Luiz Felipe Scolari (left) and Luis Enrique

Colombian defender Eder Alvarez. The rest were all 28 or over. The substitutes bench also included Javier Saviola and Luis Gonzalez, who have come home to finish their careers.

Asian teams, helped by foreign imports, appear to be closing the gap on the Latin Americans. Guangzhou and Sanfrecce Hiroshima, who qualified as champions of the host nation, showed great promise.

Guangzhou scored twice in the last 10 minutes, former Tottenham Hotspur midfielder Paulinho, heading the winner, as they came from behind to beat America 2-1, as the CONCACAF champions continued the dismal record of Mexican teams in the tournament.

Despite having by far Latin America's richest league and having performed well in the Libertadores, no Mexican side has yet to reach the Club World Cup Final.

Guangzhou even managed to provide Barcelona with a couple of scares in their first half before succumbing to Luis Suarez's hat-trick, the first in the competition's history.

Javier Mascherano made two timely

Quarter-final...Mazembe (left) and Sanfrecce

tackles to prevent Guangzhou players a clear run on goal and Claudio Bravo scooped away Elkesen's header just before half-time.

It was Guangzhou's first defeat since Scolari took over in June and "Big Phil" was back in fine form after last year's World Cup debacle.

"My life has gone on, and you are still working on the defeat rather than the victory," he told Brazilian reporters who inevitably asked about "the 7-1".

"You can tell Brazil that I am very happy in China, really content, despite the defeat in Brazil," added Scolari, who suffered defeats in the old Intercontinental Final with both Gremio and Palmeiras.

Sanfrecce, meanwhile, overcame Auckland City in the preliminary match, ending any hopes the Oceania champions had of a run to the semi-finals like they managed last year.

They then saw off African champions TP Mazembe 3-0 in the quarter-finals, a huge disappointment for the team from DR Congo who had reached the Final on their last appearance in 2010.

"I have nothing to say about the final

Marked man...River Plate try to stop Lionel Messi

Record...Luis Suarez on his way to scoring the competition's first-ever hat-tick

score, we never felt that we could do anything," said shellshocked Mazembe coach Patrice Carteron.

"We just didn't prepare well enough for this very important tournament."

Despite getting only modest support, the J.League champions made life very difficult for River in the semi-final.

Goalkeeper Marcelo Barovero was at his best to keep Sanfrecce at bay in the first half before River eventually overcame their anxiety and Lucas Alario headed the winner midway through the second half.

The semi-final is always a nerve-wracking affair for the South Americans, with the tantalising prospect of a meeting with the European champions dangling in front of their noses.

"We just had to get to the Final and it was an enormous responsibility," said Gallardo, a Marcelo Bielsa disciple who has transformed River in his 18 months in charge. "We were carrying the dreams of all these people and it put a tremendous amount of pressure on us."

In the Final, River Plate managed to make life uncomfortable for Barcelona, restricting them to a couple of chances and doing their best to wrest some possession from the Catalans and go forward themselves.

But their resistance controversially ended when Lionel Messi, playing against an Argentinian team for only the second time in his career, scored after appearing to control the ball with his arm.

Suarez added a second early in the second half and from then, it went the way of so many Barcelona matches, with Messi and Neymar taking it in turns to run at the River defence.

There was a spell when Barca looked as if they would score with almost every attack but in the end had to be content with one more, a Suarez header from a pinpoint Neymar cross.

"If there is something that these players and this club have shown, it is their unlimited hunger to win titles and the style with which they win them," said Barcelona coach Luis Enrique.

"Barcelona continues to be a guiding light, with a very clear footballing idea," he added, possibly forgetting the club's transfer ban for breaking FIFA rules on the transfer of minors.

The Japanese fans, who formed long queues to buy official Barcelona merchandise, certainly went away happy, although it is worth asking whether the competition needs a fixed host nation.

It might make more sense to stage the competition in one of the countries such as the qualifying teams, in this case possibly Argentina, Mexico or China would have made interesting hosts.

This would require arrangements to be made at short notice but this should not be a problem given that the competition is only played in two stadiums, and could be played in one.

With only six teams, a round-robin contest could then be held for the Asian, CONCACAF, African and Oceania representatives, with the top two qualifying for the semi-finals.

This would avoid the situation where teams travel around the world, go out after one match and then have to sit around for, of all things, a fifth-placed play-off.

> "Barcelona continues to be a guiding light, with a very clear footballing idea"
>
> **Barca boss Luis Enrique**

FIFA, as usual, did itself no favours at all when it came to promoting the event. Here was a chance to show that the federation was still carrying on with its real business amid all the chaos in Zurich and New York. Yet there was no attempt to organise an end-of-tournament press conference and the organising committee chairman David Chung was "not available for interviews".

Instead, it was left to Gallardo and Scolari to make the case for the tournament.

"To play in competitions like this is a great chance for us to acquire experience and improve," said Scolari.

"For the history of Argentinian football and for our institution, this is one of the most important games," said Gallardo before the Final. "This is an emblematic match for us." WS

Strong...Paulinho heads home against America

JANUARY SALE

A New Year of inspiration with magazine subscriptions from just £13.99

Celebrate 2016 with our fantastic January sale. Whatever your interest we've got the perfect subscription for you with **over 50 brands**, and all without breaking the bank.

House & Home

Hot properties, cool kitchens, country gardens – if they've got a passion for all-things home, step inside.

12 issues **Save £23** | 12 issues **Save £30** | 12 issues **Save £28** | 12 issues **Save £24**

Women, Fashion & Beauty

From fabulous high street fashion to celebrity style and beauty tips, we've got all the inspiration a woman needs.

12 issues **Save £28** | 12 issues **Save £29** | 12 issues **Save £20** | 50 issues **Save £13**

Sports & Hobbies

From golf to cycling and sailing to gardening. Whatever they're into, we're onto it.

13 issues **Save £23** | 12 issues **Save £20** | 13 issues **Save £20** | 13 issues **Save £19**

Country & Equestrian

Fuel their love of the great outdoors, with essential reads for hunting, eventing, fishing and countryside enthusiasts.

12 issues **Save £20** | 51 issues **Save £46** | 52 issues **Save £51** | 12 issues **Save £14**

Exclusive for subscribers

Rewards

Every month enjoy new **offers, giveaways** and **prizes,** included **FREE** with your subscription. Plus, access to the **digital version** for iPad and iPhone* - with all of this, your subscription will pay for itself in no time.

View all Rewards at **mymagazinerewards.co.uk**

Subscribe online at **magazinesdirect.com/FKF5**

0330 333 4555
Quote code: FKF5
7 days a week from 8am to 9pm (UK time)

Complete the coupon below

Complete this coupon and send to: **FREEPOST RTKA-YLJG-HAAK, Time Inc. (UK) Ltd, Rockwood House, 9-16 Perrymount Road, Haywards Heath RH16 3DH** (NO STAMP NEEDED - UK ONLY)

Your details

Mr/Mrs/Ms/Miss: Forename:

Surname:

If you would like to receive emails from Time Inc. (UK) Ltd containing news, special offers, product and service information and, occasionally, take part in our magazine research via email, please include your email below.

Email:

Address:

Postcode:

Home Tel No: (inc.area code)

If you would you like to receive messages from Time Inc. (UK) Ltd containing news, special offers, product and service information and, occasionally, take part in our magazine research via your mobile, please include your mobile phone number below.

Mobile No.

Date of Birth: D D M M Y Y Y Y

Magazine title: £

I would like to send a gift to:

Please also fill out 'Your Details' opposite. To give more than one subscription, please supply address details on a separate sheet.

Mr/Mrs/Ms/Miss: Forename:

Surname:

Address:

Postcode:

Magazine title: £

Total order amount: £

Choose from 2 easy ways to pay:

1. I enclose a cheque/postal order made payable to Time Inc. (UK) Ltd, for £_____

2. Please debit £_____ from my:

☐Visa ☐Visa Debit ☐MasterCard ☐Amex ☐Maestro

Card No:

Start Date (Maestro only): M M Y Y

Issue No. (Maestro only):

Expiry Date: M M Y Y

Signature: Date:
(I am over 18)

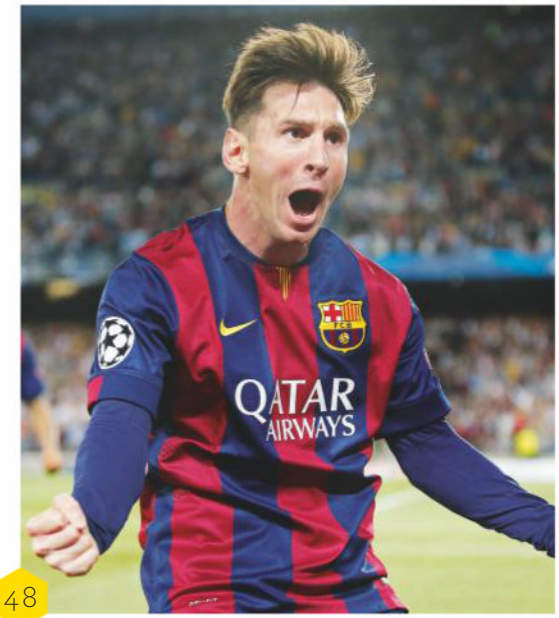
Offer open to new UK subscribers only. Final closing date for all orders is 2nd February 2016. Please allow up to six weeks for delivery of your first subscription issues. The full subscription rate is for 1 year and includes postage and packaging. If the magazine ordered changes frequency per annum, we will honour the number of issues paid for, not the term of the subscription. **For enquiries and overseas rates contact magazinesdirect@quadrantsubs.com or call +44 (0) 330 333 0233.** For full terms and conditions visit www.magazinesdirect.com/terms. * The digital version comes free with the print edition of your subscription and is available strictly on a trial basis. Time Inc. (UK) Ltd reserves the right to withdraw free access to the digital version at any time.Time Inc. (UK) Ltd, will collect your personal information to process your order. Time Inc. (UK) Ltd would like to contact you by post or telephone to promote and ask your opinion on our magazines and services. Please tick here if you prefer not to hear from Time Inc. (UK) Ltd ☐. Time Inc. (UK) Ltd may occasionally pass your details to carefully selected organisations so that they can contact you by telephone or post with regards to promoting and researching their products and services. Please tick here if you prefer not to be contacted ☐. Time Inc. (UK) Ltd would like to send messages to your mobile with offers from carefully selected organisations and brands, promoting and researching their products and services. If you want to receive messages please tick here ☐. Time Inc. (UK) Ltd would like to email you with offers from carefully selected organisations and brands, promoting and researching their products and services. If you want to receive these messages please tick here ☐.

FKF5

WorldSoccer Awards 2015

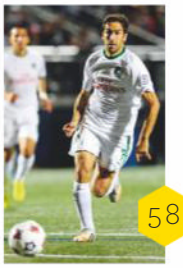
THE RESULTS OF OUR 33RD ANNUAL AWARDS – AND THE PEOPLE WHO HELPED SHAPE THE GAME OVER THE YEAR

PLAYER | TEAM | COACH | PEOPLE | HEROES & VILLAINS



48

55



58

53

57

BARCELONA SWEEP THE BOARD

Barcelona swept the board in the 33rd annual World Soccer Awards, winning all three categories. Lionel Messi is Player of the Year for a record fourth time, while Luis Enrique is Manager of the Year. Barcelona, not surprisingly after their trophy-laden year, claimed the Team of the Year title.

The awards are recognition for the starring role played by Messi in Barcelona's treble triumph of Champions League, La Liga and Spanish Cup. They capped a memorable year be beating River Plate to win the Club World Cup in Japan.

Barcelona had three of the top four players, with Messi's team-mates Neymar and Luis Suarez finishing third and fourth respectively, with Andres Iniesta making it four players in the top seven.

The treble win for Barcelona was a repeat of their clean sweep in 2009, when Messi won his first World Player title, and Pep Guardiola was Manager of the Year.

Last year's winner, Cristiano Ronaldo of Real Madrid, finished second, while there were also three Bayern Munich players in the top 10: Robert Lewandowski, Thomas Muller and Manuel Neuer.

Luis Enrique was the clear winner of the Manager award, ahead of Chile's Jorge

THE PANEL

Paddy Agnew, World Soccer, Italy. Juan Carlos Aguero, journalist, Costa Rica. Omar Al Raisi, journalist, UAE. Domenic Aquilina, World Soccer, Malta. Philippe Auclair, France Football, France. Momodou Bah, journalist, Gambia. Guillem Balague, AS, Spain. Patrick Barclay, Evening Standard, England. Jorge Barraza, Argentina. Sam Beckwith, World Soccer Czech Rep. Giuseppe Bergomi, Sky Italia, Italy. Nick Bidwell, World Soccer, Germany. Alexander Bobrov, Sport-Express, Russia. Boris Bogdanov, sportbox.ru, Russia. Gabriel Cazenave, ABC Color, Paraguay. John Chapman, World Soccer, Belgium. Michael Church, journalist, Spain. Francois Colin, De Standaard, Belgium. Dez Corkhill, Thailand. Jon Cotteril, Brazil. Sean Creedon, World Soccer, Rep Ireland. Peterjon Cresswell, World Soccer, Hungary. Andrew Dampf, Associated Press, Italy. Vicente Dattoli, journalist, Brazil. Martin Del Palacio Langer, World Soccer, Mexico. Jaap De Groot. De Telegraaf, Holland. Mehmet Demircan, Fanatik, Turkey. Danilo Diaz, Radio ADN Chile. Les Dickens, journalist, Ecuador. Klaas-Jan Droppert, World Soccer, Holland. Jerzy Dudek, pundit, Poland. John Duerden, World Soccer, South Korea. Christian Eichler, FAZ, Germany. Claudia Ekai. journalist, Kenya. Jerzy Engel, pundit, Poland. Adel Ferdowsipour, World Soccer, Iran. Johanna Gara, journalist, Sweden. Paul Gardner, World Soccer, United States. Brian Glanville, World Soccer, England. Miron Goihman, World Soccer, Moldova. Phil Gordon, World Soccer, Scotland . Rex Gowar, Reuters, Argentina. Mark Gleeson, World Soccer, South Africa. George Hamilton, pundit, Northern Ireland. Daniel Hegyi, Nemzeti Sport, Hungary. Simon Hill, Fox Sports, Australia. Jim Holden, World Soccer, England. Brian Homewood, Switzerland. Sasa Ibrulj, World Soccer, Bosnia & Herzegovina. Howard Johnson, World Soccer France. Brian Kerr, pundit, Rep Ireland. Roy Kitson, World Soccer, Northern Ireland. Tom Kundert, World Soccer, Portugal. Dariusz Kurowski, World Soccer, Poland. Javier Leira, Reuters, Chile. Sergio Levinsky, journalist, Argentina. Lasana Liburd, journalist, Trinidad & Tobago. Fabio Licari, La Gazzetta dello Sport, Italy. Alejandro Lozano, Goal News, Greece. Jimmy Magee, RTE Sport, Rep Ireland. Bhasi Malaparamba, journalist, India. Steve Menary, World Soccer, England. James Montague, journalist, England. Glenn Moore, The Independent, England. Rasim Movsumov, journalist, Azerbaijan. Manfred Muenchrath, Kicker,, Germany. Fred Musisi, journalist, Uganda. Andres Must, World Soccer, Estonia. Vladimir Novak, World Soccer, Serbia. Fernando Nurnberg, journalist, Bolivia. Gezim Nushi, World Soccer, Albania. Sigurd Odegaard, World Soccer, Norway. Oluwashina Okeleji, journalist, Nigeria. Michael Oti Adjei, journalist, Ghana . Yazid Ouahib, El Watan, Algeria. Dejan Panic, Dan, Montenegro. Rumen Paytashev, World Soccer Bulgaria. Diego Paz, journalist, Honduras. Maurizio Pizzoferrato, Agenzia Area, Italy. Mike Plastow, World

Sampaoli and Pep Guardiola of Bayern.

And Barcelona were emphatic victors of the Team award, ahead of Copa America winners Chile.

The awards were decided by votes from a panel of 100 journalists and pundits who chose their top 10 players of the year, with points awarded to each selection.

For full details of how the panel voted, go to worldsoccer.com/awards

Triumphant... Barcelona

Soccer, Japan. Ashok Purohit, Oman. Keir Radnedge, World Soccer, England. Joel Richards, World Soccer, Argentina. Emanuel Rosu, World Soccer, Romania. Pangeran Siahaan, BEin Sports, Indonesia. Manos Staramopoulous, journalist, Greece. Milorad Stojmanovski, World Soccer, Macedonia. Jacques Sys, Foot/Sport, Belgium. Rok Tamse, journalist, Slovenia. Troels Bager Thogersen, TIPS Bladet, Denmark. Martin Tyler, Sky Sports, England. Colin Udoh, journalist, Nigeria. Fernando Urbano, A Bola, Portugal. Cees Van Cuilenborg, ESM, Holland. Wolfgang Winheim, journalist, Austria. Jonathan Wilson, journalist, England. Mike Woitala, Soccer America, United States. Carl Worswick, World Soccer, Colombia. Oleg Zadernovsky, World Soccer Ukraine

WORLD PLAYER OF THE YEAR

Rnk	Name	Pts
1	**Lionel Messi** *Barcelona & Argentina*	927
2	**Cristiano Ronaldo** *Real Madrid & Portugal*	702
3	**Neymar** *Barcelona & Brazil*	675
4	**Luis Suarez** *Barcelona & Uruguay*	582
5	**Robert Lewandowski** *Bayern Munich & Poland*	450
6	**Thomas Muller** *Bayern Munich & Germany*	240
7	**Andres Iniesta** *Barcelona & Spain*	222
8	**Zlatan Ibrahimovic** *Paris Saint-Germain & Sweden*	196
9	**Paul Pogba** *Juventus & France*	137
10	**Manuel Neuer** *Bayern Munich & Germany*	131
11	**Alexis Sanchez** *Arsenal & Chile*	123
12	**Eden Hazard** *Chelsea & Belgium*	102
13	**Sergio Aguero** *Manchester City & Argentina*	98
14	**Kevin De Bruyne** *Wolfsburg/Manchester City & Belgium*	78
15	**Arturo Vidal** *Juventus/Bayern Munich & Chile*	73
16	**Gianluigi Buffon** *Juventus & Italy*	72
17	**Carlos Tevez** *Juventus/BocaJuniors & Argentina*	43
18	**Yaya Toure** *Manchester City & Ivory Coast*	39
19=	**Gareth Bale** *Real Madrid & Wales*	36
19=	**Ivan Rakitic** *Barcelona & Croatia*	36
21	**Javier Mascherano** *Barcelona & Argentina*	27
22	**Jerome Boateng** *Bayern Munich & Germany*	26
23=	**Andrea Pirlo** *Juventus/New York City FC & Italy*	24

Hot shot... Pierre-Emerick Aubameyeng

Rnk	Name	Pts
23=	**Pierre-Emerick Aubameyeng** *Borussia Dortmund & Gabon*	22
25	**Wayne Rooney** *Manchester Utd & England*	19
26=	**Sergio Busquets** *Barcelona & Spain*	18
26=	**Giorgio Chiellini** *Juventus & Italy*	18
28	**Arjen Robben** *Bayern Munich & Holland*	16
29=	**David Alaba** *Bayern Munich & Austria*	14
29=	**Diego Costa** *Chelsea & Spain*	14
31=	**Douglas Costa** *Shakhtar Donetsk/ Bayern Munich & Brazil*	11
31=	**Diego Godin** *Atletico Madrid & Uruguay*	11
33=	**Dani Alves** *Barcelona & Brazil*	10
33=	**Philippe Coutinho** *Liverpool & Brazil*	10
33=	**Sergio Ramos** *Real Madrid & Spain*	10
33=	**James Rodriguez** *Real Madrid & Colombia*	10
37=	**Marco Reus** *Borussia Dortmund & Germany*	9
37=	**David Silva** *Manchester City & Spain*	9
39	**David De Gea** *Manchester Utd & Spain*	7
39=	**Oscar** *Chelsea & Brazil*	7
39=	**Raphael Varane** *Real Madrid & France*	7
42=	**Karim Benzema** *Real Madrid & France*	6
42=	**Leonardo Bonucci** *Juventus & Italy*	6
42=	**Harry Kane** *Tottenham Hotspur & England*	6
42=	**Gerard Pique** *Barcelona & Spain*	6
42=	**Xavi** *Barcelona/Al Sadd & Spain*	6
42=	**Andriy Yarmolenko** *Dynamo Kiev & Ukraine*	6
48=	**Luka Modric** *Real Madrid & Croatia*	5
48=	**Thiago Silva** *Paris Saint-Germain & Brazil*	5
48=	**Fernando Torres** *Atletico Madrid & Spain*	5
48=	**Robin Van Persie** *Manchester Utd/Fenerbahce & Holland*	5
52=	**Gonzalo Higuain** *Napoli & Argentina*	4
52=	**Toni Kroos** *Real Madrid & Germany*	4
52=	**Philipp Lahm** *Bayern Munich & Germany*	4
52=	**Claudio Marchisio** *Juventus & Italy*	4
52=	**Keylor Navas** *Real Madrid & Costa Rica*	4
52=	**Raheem Sterling** *Liverpool/Manchester City & England*	4
52=	**Jon Walters** *Stoke City & Rep Ireland*	4
59=	**Omar Abdulrahman** *Al-Ain & UAE*	3
59=	**Jesus Corona** *Twente/Porto & Mexico*	3
59=	**Cesc Fabregas** *Chelsea & Spain*	3
59=	**Mauro Icardi** *Internazionale & Argentina*	3
59=	**Alvaro Morata** *Juventus & Spain*	3
59=	**Dimitri Payet** *Marseille/West Ham & France*	3
59=	**Jamie Vardy** *Leicester City & England*	3
59=	**Eduardo Vargas** *QPR/Hoffenheim & Chile*	3
67=	**Moussa Dembele** *Tottenham Hotspur & Belgium*	2
67=	**Ricardo Goulart** *Guangzhou Evergrande & Brazil*	2
67=	**Joe Hart** *Manchester City & England*	2
67=	**Thibaut Courtois** *Chelsea & Belgium*	2
67=	**Jorge Valdivia** *Palmeiras/Al Wahda & Chile*	2
72	**Andre Ayew** *Marseille/Swansea & Ghana*	1
72=	**Carlos Bacca** *Sevilla/Milan & Colombia*	1
72=	**Claudio Bravo** *Barcelona & Chile*	1
72=	**Marcelo Diaz** *Hamburg & Chile*	1
72=	**Luciano Figueroa** *Johor Darul Takzim & Argentina*	1
72=	**Hulk** *Zenit & Brazil*	1
72=	**Mats Hummels** *Borussia Dortmund & Germany*	1
72=	**Marcelo** *Real Madrid & Brazil*	1
72=	**Riyad Mahrez** *Leicester City & Algeria*	1
72=	**Mesut Ozil** *Arsenal & Germany*	1
72=	**Richie Towell** *Dundalk & Rep Ireland*	1
72=	**Willian** *Chelsea & Brazil*	1

WORLD MANAGER OF THE YEAR

	Name	
1	**Luis Enrique** *Barcelona*	49 votes
2	**Jorge Sampaoli** *Chile*	15
3	**Pep Guardiola** *Bayern Munich*	10
4	**Michael O'Neill** *Northern Ireland*	4
5	**Lars Lagerbeck/Heimir Hallgrimsson** *Iceland*	3

Scudetto... Max Allegri

	Name	
6	**Max Allegri** *Juventus*	2
X	**Diego Simeone** *Atletico Madrid*	2
7=	**Carlo Ancelotti** *Real Madrid*	1
7=	**Pal Dardai** *Hungary*	1
7=	**Gianni Di Biaisi** *Albania*	1
7=	**Eusebio Di Francesco** *Sassuolo*	1
7=	**Eddie Howe** *Bournemouth*	1
7=	**Jorge Jesus** *Benfica/Sporting Lisbon*	1
7=	**Joachim Low** *Germany*	1
7=	**Jose Mourinho** *Chelsea*	1
7=	**Luis Felipe Scolari** *Guangzhou Evergrande*	1
7=	**Uli Stielike** *South Korea*	1
7=	**Unai Emery** *Sevilla*	1
7=	**Hein Vanhaezebrouck** *Gent*	1

WORLD TEAM OF THE YEAR

1 Barcelona	82
2 Chile	9
3 Bayern Munich	3
4 Iceland	2
5= Germany	1
5= Turkey	1

PLAYER

LIONEL **MESSI**

Record-breaking Argentinian scales new heights in Barcelona's trophy sweep

A year on from Argentina's defeat in the 2014 World Cup Final, Lionel Messi is back on top of the world. The Barcelona and Argentina star is *World Soccer*'s Player of the Year for a record fourth time, having previously won the award in 2009, 2011 and 2012.

Messi's victory in 2015 means he overtakes his great rival Cristiano Ronaldo (winner in 2008, 2013 and 2014) and his predecessor at Barcelona, the Brazilian Ronaldo (1996, 1997 and 2002).

Debate will, of course, rage as to who can lay claim to the title of the world's greatest-ever player. While Argentina's defeat in Brazil has ensured that World Cup winners Pele and Diego Maradona can still keep a hand on the crown, Messi did everything possible in 2015 to remind the world of his brilliance.

A hugely impressive treble of Champions League, La Liga and Spanish Cup was complemented by the European Super Cup and, at the year's end, the Club World Cup. The only cloud on Barcelona's horizon was a defeat to Athletic Bilbao in the Spanish Super Cup. Even then, there was a silver lining as Messi's goal in the second leg, albeit with Bilbao having taken a four-goal lead from the first leg, was ▸

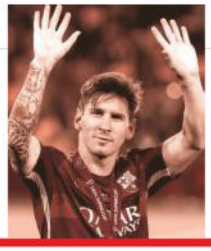
DID YOU KNOW?

Messi's goal in the Club World Cup Final was his fifth in five games, making him the competition's joint top scorer of all time.

So close...Messi and Argentina reached the 2015 Copa America Final but were beaten by Chile

The Facts

AGE 28 (24.07.87)
NATIONALITY Argentinian
CLUB HONOURS La Liga 2005, 2006, 2009, 2010, 2011, 2013, 2015; Spanish Cup 2009, 2012, 2015; Spanish Super Cup 2005, 2006, 2009, 2010, 2011, 2013; Champions League 2006, 2009, 2011, 2015; UEFA Super Cup 2009, 2011, 2015; Club World Cup 2009, 2011, 2015



"Don't write about him, don't try to describe him. Just watch him"
Pep Guardiola

Loyal...Messi has spent his entire career with Barcelona

PREVIOUS WINNERS

1982	**PAOLO ROSSI** *Juventus & Italy*
1983	**ZICO** *Udinese & Brazil*
1984	**MICHEL PLATINI** *Juventus & France*
1985	**MICHEL PLATINI** *Juventus & France*
1986	**DIEGO MARADONA** *Napoli & Argentina*
1987	**RUUD GULLIT** *Milan & Holland*
1988	**MARCO VAN BASTEN** *Milan & Holland*
1989	**RUUD GULLIT** *Milan & Holland*
1990	**LOTHAR MATTHAUS** *Internazionale & West Germany*
1991	**JEAN-PIERRE PAPIN** *Marseille & France*
1992	**MARCO VAN BASTEN** *Milan & Holland*
1993	**ROBERTO BAGGIO** *Juventus & Italy*
1994	**PAOLO MALDINI** *Milan & Italy*
1995	**GIANLUCA VIALLI** *Juventus & Italy*
1996	**RONALDO** *Barcelona & Brazil*
1997	**RONALDO** *Barcelona/Internazionale & Brazil*
1998	**ZINEDINE ZIDANE** *Juventus & France*
1999	**RIVALDO** *Barcelona & Brazil*
2000	**LUIS FIGO** *Barcelona/Real Madrid & Portugal*
2001	**MICHAEL OWEN** *Liverpool & England*
2002	**RONALDO** *Internazionale/Real Madrid & Brazil*
2003	**PAVEL NEDVED** *Juventus & Czech Republic*
2004	**RONALDINHO** *Barcelona & Brazil*
2005	**RONALDINHO** *Barcelona & Brazil*
2006	**FABIO CANNAVARO** *Juventus/Real Madrid & Italy*
2007	**KAKA** *Milan & Brazil*
2008	**CRISTIANO RONALDO** *Manchester United & Portugal*
2009	**LIONEL MESSI** *Barcelona & Argentina*
2010	**XAVI** *Barcelona & Spain*
2011	**LIONEL MESSI** *Barcelona & Argentina*
2012	**LIONEL MESSI** *Barcelona & Argentina*
2013	**CRISTIANO RONALDO** *Real Madrid & Portugal*
2014	**CRISTIANO RONALDO** *Real Madrid & Portugal*

LFP
QATAR
10
FCB

one of six competitions in which he scored in 2015. It was the second time in his career, after 2011, that he had scored in six different competitions in the calendar year.

Yet Messi began the year under a cloud. Amid reports of a clash with coach Luis Enrique on the training ground, he was missing from Barcelona's traditional January open-training session. The official line was that the Argentinian was sidelined with "gastroenteritis", but midfielder Xavi inadvertently let slip in a pre-recorded interview that the aforementioned illness was used by club officials as "an excuse for when something else is going on".

Off the pitch, Messi and his father, Jorge, were having a testing time at the hands of the Spanish tax authorities. The Spanish media were briefed that he might be prepared to quit Spain as he felt he was being singled out for special treatment compared with other elite sports players in the country with disputed tax affairs.

Messi had his first run-in over tax in 2013 when he was accused of concealing €4.1 million earned from image rights in shell companies in Belize and Uruguay. He paid an agreed €5m in settlement but the authorities indicated they intended to pursue him further.

Nightmare...tormenting Roma in this season's Champions League

In October 2015, Spain's public prosecutor dropped tax-fraud charges against him but his father may still stand trial over the allegations.

By then, his form on the pitch had reached new heights.

An incredible goal in the 2015 Spanish Cup Final against Athletic Bilbao, when he took the ball from almost the halfway line, past four defenders before shooting past the keeper, brought comparisons with his 2007 goal against Getafe, itself a moment which had seen the teenage Messi compared with Maradona.

Victory over Juventus followed a few days later in the Champions League Final in Berlin, although the limelight was taken, for once, by his team-mates Neymar and Luis Suarez.

A knee injury in September made him a doubt for the *classico* against Real Madrid in November. By the time he appeared as a 57th-minute substitute, Barcelona were already three ahead and heading for a 4-0 thrashing of their great rivals.

And at December's Club World Cup in Japan, he scored the opening goal against River Plate in the Final – the first time in his career he had scored against an Argentinian side.

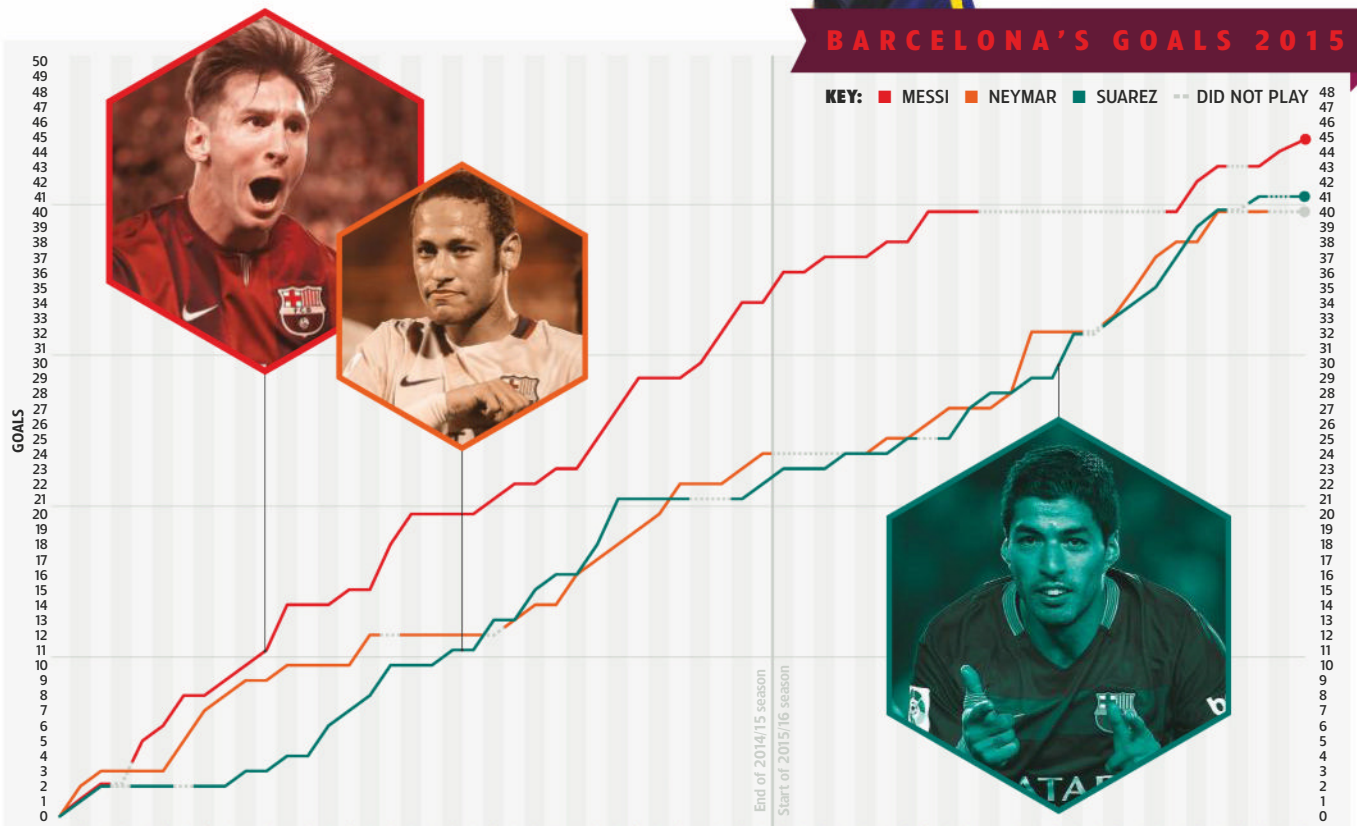
On a personal level, Messi is one year into a five-year contract with Barca that pays him £16m a year.

In September his partner, Antonella Roccuzzo, gave birth to a second son, Mateo, a brother for Thiago.

On and off the pitch, life could not get much better.

John Holmesdale

BARCELONA'S GOALS 2015



DATE	GAME	RES
JAN 4	Real Sociedad	0-1
JAN 8	Elche (Cup)	5-0
JAN 11	At Madrid	3-1
JAN 15	Elche (Cup)	4-0
JAN 18	Deportivo	4-0
JAN 21	At Madrid (Cup)	1-0
JAN 24	Elche	6-0
JAN 28	At Madrid (Cup)	3-2
FEB 1	Villarreal	3-2
FEB 8	Ath Bilbao	5-2
FEB 11	Villarreal (Cup)	3-1
FEB 15	Levante	5-0
FEB 21	Malaga	0-1
FEB 24	Man City (CL)	2-1
FEB 28	Granada	3-1
MAR 4	Villarreal (Cup)	3-1
MAR 8	Rayo Vallecano	6-1
MAR 14	Eibar	2-0
MAR 18	Man City (CL)	1-0
MAR 22	Real Madrid	2-1
APR 5	Celta Vigo	1-0
APR 8	Almeria	4-0
APR 11	Sevilla	2-2
APR 15	PSG (CL)	3-1
APR 18	Valencia	2-0
APR 21	PSG (CL)	2-0
APR 28	Getafe	6-0
MAY 2	Cordoba	8-0
MAY 6	Bayern Munich (CL)	3-0
MAY 9	Real Sociedad	2-0
MAY 12	Bayern Munich (CL)	2-3
MAY 17	At Madrid	1-0
MAY 23	Deportivo	2-2
MAY 30	Ath Bilbao (Cup)	3-1
JUN 6	Juventus (CL)	3-1
AUG 11	Sevilla (USC)	5-4
AUG 14	Ath Bilbao (SSC)	0-4
AUG 17	Ath Bilbao (SSC)	1-1
AUG 23	Ath Bilbao	1-0
AUG 29	Malaga	1-0
SEP 12	At Madrid	2-1
SEP 16	Roma (CL)	1-1
SEP 20	Levante	4-1
SEP 23	Celta Vigo	1-4
SEP 26	Las Palmas	2-1
SEP 29	B Leverkusen (CL)	2-1
OCT 3	Sevilla	1-2
OCT 17	Rayo Valecano	5-2
OCT 20	BATE (CL)	2-0
OCT 25	Eibar	3-1
OCT 28	Villanovense (Cup)	0-0
OCT 31	Getafe	2-0
NOV 4	BATE (CL)	3-0
NOV 8	Villarreal	3-0
NOV 21	Real Madrid	4-0
NOV 24	Roma (CL)	6-1
NOV 28	Real Sociedad	4-0
DEC 2	Villanovense (Cup)	6-1
DEC 6	Valencia	1-1
DEC 9	B Leverkusen (CL)	1-1
DEC 12	Deportivo	2-2

MANAGER

LUIS ENRIQUE

Won the treble in his first season with Barcelona

Luis Enrique began 2015 as a man under severe pressure at Camp Nou. Barcelona had lost to his previous club Celta Vigo, the club's sporting director Andoni Zubizarreta had resigned after the club was placed under a transfer embargo for signing underage players, and there were reported tensions between Enrique and Lionel Messi.

One poll reported 68 per cent of supporters believed he should be sacked.

Yet less than 12 months later, the coach is basking in the glory of his award as World Manager of Year after leading Barcelona to an incredible haul of trophies: the Champions League, Spanish League and cup, European Super Cup and Club World Cup.

The victories have enabled him to emulate the man who many in Barcelona thought they could not replace: his former Barca team-mate Pep Guardiola, who also won a clean sweep of trophies in 2009.

Yet Enrique has proved to be a different type of manager to Guardiola. Though he has a strong Barcelona heritage, having played for the club and coached Barcelona B, he has also tried to introduce new ideas to the club.

His different approach reflects a different upbringing to Guardiola. Enrique was raised as a player at Sporting Gijon's academy not Barcelona's. He even played at Real Madrid before heading to Catalonia, where in contrast to today's all-conquering side, he did not taste much success. Indeed, the club seemed in perpetual crisis for much of his time as a player at Camp Nou.

When he retired, he decided to head off to Australia for a six month holiday before taking up the challenge of running extreme races.

He competed in the Quebrantehuesos, or "bone crusher" bike race, riding 205km through the Pyrenees as well as completing the Frankfurt Ironman, a 10-hour triathlon and the Sables marathon in Morocco, 255km through the desert with a 10kg pack on his back.

Luis Enrique returned to coach Barcelona B, then Roma and then Celta, where one of his notable innovations was to erect scaffolding at the club's training ground from which he watched the sessions.

An innovator, extreme competitor and, now in 2015, a record-breaking winner.

John Holmesdale

The boss..with Javier Mascherano

DID YOU KNOW?

While playing for Real Madrid, he scored in a 5-0 win over Barca in the Bernabeu

The Facts

AGE 45 (08.05.70)
CLUBS AS A COACH Barca B 2008-11, Roma 2011-12, Celta Vigo 2013-14, Barcelona 2014
HONOURS Champions League, La Liga, Spanish Cup, Club World Cup and Spanish Super Cup (all 2015)

"We seek to break records with this great team through humility and hard work"

Enrique talking to Barcelona TV in December 2015

PREVIOUS WINNERS

1982	ENZO BEARZOT *Italy*
1983	SEPP PIONTEK *Denmark*
1984	MICHEL HIDALGO *France*
1985	TERRY VENABLES *Barcelona*
1986	GUY THYS *Belgium*
1987	JOHAN CRUYFF *Ajax*
1988	RINUS MICHELS *Holland/Bayer Leverkusen*
1989	ARRIGO SACCHI *Milan*
1990	FRANZ BECKENBAUER *West Germany*
1991	MICHEL PLATINI *France*
1992	RICHARD MOLLER NIELSEN *Denmark*
1993	ALEX FERGUSON *Manchester United*
1994	CARLOS ALBERTO PARREIRA *Brazil*
1995	LOUIS VAN GAAL *Ajax*
1996	BERTI VOGTS *Germany*
1997	OTTMAR HITZFELD *Borussia Dortmund*
1998	ARSENE WENGER *Arsenal*
1999	ALEX FERGUSON *Manchester United*
2000	DINO ZOFF *Italy*
2001	GERARD HOULLIER *Liverpool*
2002	GUUS HIDDINK *South Korea*
2003	CARLO ANCELOTTI *Milan*
2004	JOSE MOURINHO *Porto/Chelsea*
2005	JOSE MOURINHO *Chelsea*
2006	MARCELLO LIPPI *Italy*
2007	ALEX FERGUSON *Manchester United*
2008	ALEX FERGUSON *Manchester United*
2009	PEP GUARDIOLA *Barcelona*
2010	JOSE MOURINHO *Internazionale/Real Madrid*
2011	PEP GUARDIOLA *Barcelona*
2012	VICENTE DEL BOSQUE *Spain*
2013	JUPP HEYNCKES *Bayern Munich*
2014	JOACHIM LOW *Germany*

TEAM

BARCELONA

Five trophies in a year for all-conquering Barca

Barcelona continue to break records. The 2015 award is their fourth World Team of the Year title – a record, overtaking the three titles won by Milan, Brazil and France and equalling the four of Spain, the national side that has featured so many of Barcelona's key players in recent times.

However, it is the South American trio of Lionel Messi, Neymar and Luis Suarez that have elevated the Spanish, European and world club champions to new heights.

The 3-0 victory over South American champions River Plate in the Club World Cup Final took Barcelona's goal tally to 176 for the calendar year, beating the previous record of 175 scored in 2012.

Victory in Japan meant Barcelona became the first team to win the Club World Cup three times. It also capped an incredible autumn in which Barca thrashed coach Luis Enrique's former side Roma 6-1 in the Champions League and put Real Madrid to the sword in the *classico*.

When Messi suffered a knee injury in September, the fear was that the club, weakened by a year-long transfer embargo, would not be able to keep up with Real Madrid. Yet of the 10 games between Messi's injury and the *classico* in November, Barcelona won eight and lost just once, to Sevilla, before humiliating Real Madrid at the Bernabeu.

Looking back on Barcelona's incredible trophy haul in 2015 – Champions League, Spanish Liga, Spanish Cup, European Super Cup and Club World Cup – it is hard to believe that the year began under such a dark cloud. With the club under a transfer embargo as punishment for signing minors, president Josep Maria Bartomeu called early elections for the summer in a bid to lift the club out of the malaise that appeared to have taken hold.

Spanish media reported training-ground rows between Luis Enrique and Messi, while the firing of sporting director Andoni Zubizarreta and the resignation of his assistant and club legend Carles Puyol added to the club's problems.

Yet for all the problems off the pitch, they produced a string of extraordinary performances on it that yielded a glittering haul of trophies. By the end of June, Bartomeu was able to ride a new wave of optimism, beating his closest challenger, the former president Joan Laporta to secure another term in office.

John Holmesdale

DID YOU KNOW?

Victory in the Club World Cup saw Barca equal Al Ahly's record of 20 international titles – although the Egyptian club claim Barca's three Inter-Cities Fairs Cups do not count.

Euro champions... celebrating in Berlin

The Facts

ROLE OF HONOUR
In 2015, Luis Enrique's side won five major trophies: the Champions League, Spanish liga, Spanish Cup, European Super Cup and Club World Cup. The only trophy Barcelona failed to collect was the Spanish Super Cup, in which they lost to Athletic Bilbao.

"Més que un club"
The club motto, which means "more than a club"

PREVIOUS WINNERS

1982	BRAZIL
1983	HAMBURG
1984	FRANCE
1985	EVERTON
1986	ARGENTINA
1987	PORTO
1988	HOLLAND
1989	MILAN
1990	WEST GERMANY
1991	FRANCE
1992	DENMARK
1993	PARMA
1994	MILAN
1995	AJAX
1996	NIGERIA
1997	BORUSSIA DORTMUND
1998	FRANCE
1999	MANCHESTER UNITED
2000	FRANCE
2001	LIVERPOOL
2002	BRAZIL
2003	MILAN
2004	GREECE
2005	LIVERPOOL
2006	BARCELONA
2007	SPAIN
2008	SPAIN
2009	BARCELONA
2010	SPAIN
2011	BARCELONA
2012	SPAIN
2013	BAYERN MUNICH
2014	GERMANY

PEOPLE

JORGE **SAMPAOLI**

Argentinian coach who led Chile to their first continental title

As he paces up and down his technical area for 90 minutes, Chile boss Jorge Sampaoli looks as if he runs on batteries – evidently the strong, long lasting type, for they have carried his little legs from obscurity to the FIFA podium as one of the world's top three coaches. It is a fitting honour for a man being celebrated not just for what he has done – the Copa America triumph in 2015 was Chile's first senior title – but more for the way that his teams go about their business.

As befits a self-confessed disciple of Marcelo Bielsa, he sends his team out to attack and to impose themselves on the game. As with his idol, there is little place for the conventional full-back in Sampaoli's line-ups. He wants both his full-backs to push forward at the same time, linking up with wide attackers to form two-against-one situations down the flanks, pressing the opposition back in their own half. Win or lose, there is rarely a dull game when Sampaoli is around.

From Casilda, a small town some 30 miles outside Argentina's second city of Rosario, the Chilean press frequently refer to Sampaoli as "*El Casildense*", as if to draw attention to his humble origins. A midfielder by trade, his career was ended by serious injury while still a teenager so, like Bielsa, he started coaching early.

Unlike Bielsa, who is from a distinguished Rosario family, Sampaoli started at the very bottom, taking charge of teams in the local Casilda league. A famous photograph exists of a youthful Sampaoli, barred from a game after picking up a suspension, watching the action from a tree outside the stadium. These days he is much more comfortably perched. There will be no shortage of proposals when he leaves his current post – which could be imminent as a consequence of turmoil in the Chilean FA.

Ecstatic...Jorge Sampaoli celebrates a Chile goal in the 2018 World Cup qualifiers

Sampaoli had to clock up the miles on his journey from Casilda to glory with Chile. He was given a chance by the Juan Aurich club in Peru in 2002. He did not last long, but was handed further opportunities in the country with Sport Boys, Colonel Bolognesi and, briefly, Sporting Cristal. He had a spell in Chile with O'Higgins, and then with Emelec in Ecuador, but it was on his return to Chile that his career finally took off.

His Universidad de Chile side won three consecutive league titles, and in exhilarating style won the 2011 Sudamericana Cup. In the course of that campaign they won 3-0 away to Ronaldinho's Flamengo. It was so convincing – the margin of victory did not begin to do justice to the superiority of "la U" – that the entire continent sat up to take notice. This was something bold, exciting and different.

After a brief, unsuccessful interlude when Claudio Borghi was in charge, Sampaoli was an obvious choice to take over Chile's national team and build on the foundations Bielsa had laid in the 2010 World Cup.

Success...Claudio Bravo lifts the Copa America

Years ago Sampaoli wrote to Bielsa, apologising for not having been able to put successfully into practice the lessons of his mentor. Subsequently, though, he has added to the repertoire. Without betraying the general idea, his Chile side won the Copa America Final against his native Argentina with a pragmatism not always seen in Bielsa teams. And that long-awaited silverware has charged up Sampaoli's batteries for all the little steps he will be taking up and down the world's touchlines over the next few years.

Tim Vickery

The Facts

AGE: 55 (13.03.60)
NATIONALITY: Argentinian
HONOURS: Chilean league 2011A, 2011C, 2012A; Sudamericana Cup 2011; Copa America 2015

DID YOU KNOW?

Sampaoli and the man he calls his mentor, Marcelo Bielsa, were both on Premier League club Swansea City's shortlist in their hunt for a new coach.

"The country is euphoric. It's a priceless and unforgettable feeling"

Sampaoli on Chile's Copa America triumph

PEOPLE

LORETTA **LYNCH**

The Attorney General heading the FIFAgate investigation

When Sepp Blatter once forecast that "the future of football is female" he did not have Loretta Elizabeth Lynch in mind. But the 83rd Attorney General of the United States may turn out to be one of the most significant figures in the history of FIFA, if not of the grand old game itself.

Lynch had been in the job barely a month when she secured greater worldwide fame than the vast majority of her predecessors by stepping up at the head of the FIFAgate corruption investigation.

Her career focus and work ethic are instructive and should worry every football official in Latin America who has yet to come under her law officers' scrutiny.

Now 56, Lynch graduated from Harvard Law School in 1984, became a federal prosecutor six years later and served as a US attorney for the eastern district of New York from 2010 until her appointment by President Barack Obama in April 2015.

Ratification of her appointment took four months – not down to any question about her capability or status as the first African American woman to hold the role, but due to political wrangling over other issues in Congress.

At her nomination, Obama said: "At every stage in her career, Loretta has followed the principles of fairness, equality and justice that she absorbed as a young girl.

"She was born in Greensboro, North Carolina, the year before black students there sat down at a whites-only lunch counter, helping to spark a movement that would change the course of this country."

Her determination to give the green light to pursue FIFAgate also changed the course of FIFA since a dramatic May 27, 2015. An operation planned for several months between the US Department of Justice and the Swiss Attorney General led to the detentions of the "Zurich Seven" at the luxury Baur au Lac hotel and then to Lynch's unveiling in New York of the full damning raft of initial indictments.

Potent message... Loretta Lynch briefs the media on the progress of FIFAgate

The charges, against senior FIFA and Latin American officials, family members and friends, marketing executives and their companies, ranged from conspiracy and wire fraud to racketeering and money laundering. The criminality fell within Lynch's jurisdiction because much of the money laundering had been channelled through US banks and finance houses.

She said: "The indictment alleges corruption that is rampant, systemic and deep-rooted, both abroad and here in the United States. It spans at least two generations of soccer officials who, as alleged, have abused positions of trust to acquire millions of dollars in bribes and kickbacks." As one of her aides added: "We're struck by just how long this went on for. It just seemed to permeate every element of the federation."

If FIFA president Sepp Blatter had hoped this would be the end of the matter he was wrong. This was merely the end of the beginning as Lynch herself made clear in Zurich, on FIFA's doorstep, in September.

Warning more arrests were on the way, she said: "The problem of corruption in soccer is global and we will remain vigilant.

"One hallmark has guided our work: all individuals involved in soccer, this beloved sport through which we teach sportsmanship, integrity and fair play, must be committed to reform and compliance with the rule of law.

"To anyone who seeks to live in the past, this global response sends a clear message: you're on the wrong side of progress and do a disservice to the integrity of this sport."

Keir Radnedge

The Facts

AGE: 56 (21.05.59)
NATIONALITY: American
POSITIONS: US Attorney for Eastern District of New York 1999-2001 and 2010-15; US Attorney General 2015-present

DID YOU KNOW?

As a child, Lynch would watch proceedings in the courthouse of Durham, North Carolina with her father, who was a Baptist minister.

> "At every stage in her career, Loretta has followed the principles of fairness, equality and justice that she absorbed as a young girl"
>
> Barack Obama

PEOPLE

HANS-JOACHIM **ECKERT**

The German judge who suspended Blatter and Platini

Short, dapper and quietly spoken, Hans-Joachim Eckert hardly fits the popular image of a relentless battler against the forces of evil. But that may also be one of his most important weapons in a judicial career marked by a relentlessly firm and forensic pursuit of lawbreakers.

Certainly he presents none of the outward trappings of power common among other grandees at the head of FIFA. But then, that is not his style – which is what many of the men he has kicked out of football have found unbalancing.

Eckert was unknown to football when he was appointed, in July 2012, as president of the adjudicatory chamber of the FIFA independent ethics commission, which had been created at the behest of reform guru Mark Pieth.

Observers considered the juxtaposition of the words "FIFA" and "independent" a bad joke, especially given FIFA president Sepp Blatter's insistence on using both words in reference to the committee, as if in a pretence that its terms of reference were beyond his command.

Later, of course, when the ethics committee turned around to bite him, Blatter wasted no time directing bitterly resentful barbs at Eckert and co. But by this time Eckert, after a somewhat rocky start, had come to grips with both the job and the two-faced world in which he had been commissioned to operate.

Born in Plochingen, near Stuttgart, he studied law in Munich and raced up the legal system to become a judge specialising in tax evasion, money laundering and organised crime. From 2005 until July 2015 he was presiding judge of the main financial criminal court.

Firm...Hans-Joachim Eckert gave 90-day suspensions to Blatter and Platini

His appointment by FIFA in the summer of 2012 was matched with that of American Michael Garcia as chief investigator and prosecutor. The idea of international co-operation was reasonable in principle but flawed in practice.

The clash of contrasting judicial cultures was a recipe for trouble. Garcia was scathing at the manner in which he believed Eckert had traduced his inquiry into the 2018-2022 World Cup bid process. Garcia stormed out, leaving an impression that he had been waiting for a reason to wash his hands of FIFA.

Eckert may also have learned a salutary lesson from the report farrago about the enormous, worldwide media and public scrutiny of his work. This was no comfortable sinecure for a retirement-bound judicial veteran. This was high-profile, roller-coaster stuff. The solid reputation he had spent years developing in southern Germany was on the very public line.

Clearly, Eckert has found working with the militaristic Swiss lawyer Cornel Borbely, Garcia's successor, a more legally productive experience.

Yet, for all the sanctions imposed on a range of men from Mohamed bin Hammam – it was Eckert who made a life ban stick – to Franz Beckenbauer, the common assumption remained that he was little more than Blatter's poodle.

Until October 8, that is. This was the day Eckert ordered provisional 90-day suspensions for both Blatter and UEFA president Michel Platini as well as for secretary-general Jerome Valcke. Along the way he also kicked Chung Mong-joon out of the FIFA election race with a six-year ban for a regulatory breach concerning the 2018-2022 inquiry.

That was the day everyone in football changed their opinion about Eckert.

Including, above all, Sepp Blatter.

Keir Radnedge

DID YOU KNOW?

The Bavarian is not a known sports fan and is believed to have only ever twice visited Munich's old Olympic stadium.

The Facts

AGE: 67
NATIONALITY: German
POSITIONS: Senior Prosecutor, Prosecution Office Munich I 1999-2003; Presiding Judge of the Penal Court Munich I 1999-2003; Chairman, adjudicatory chamber of FIFA Independent Ethics Commission 2012-present

"I am bewildered by the insinuations and allegations brought against me"

Defiant until the end, Sepp Blatter in December 2015

PEOPLE

CLAUDIO **RANIERI**

Leicester manager leading the Premier League's new order

The quality of the football may be on the decline in the Premier League but the feelgood factor is sky high in English football right now. And if one figure epitomises the smiling face of the game in the home of soccer it is the veteran manager whose arrival last summer was met with mockery and scorn.

Claudio Ranieri is the surprising catalyst for the most open and most engaging season since the Premier League was created by England's elite clubs more than two decades ago.

When the Italian was the shock choice to take over at Leicester City, the doubters were everywhere, led by one of the club's most famous former players Gary Lineker, who called the move "uninspiring".

However, Ranieri has been a top coach for many years, with a wonderful pedigree at clubs such as Juventus, Atletico Madrid, Internazionale and Valencia to name but a few – not to mention a fine spell in charge of Chelsea in the pre-Abramovich era.

Nobody is sceptical any more, and the vast majority are hugely grateful that his Leicester side have been a dazzling delight at the top of the table – a gleeful and repentant Lineker among them.

Ranieri had the wisdom to take the best of what he found on arrival at the King Power Stadium – the electric goalscoring verve of Jamie Vardy and the trickery of Riyad Mahrez – and supplement it with the best buy in the English summer transfer window: the £5.6million signing of French midfielder N'Golo Kante from Caen.

Ranieri's humour and modesty appeal to the English temperament and to English football fans as a welcome contrast to the arrogant certainties displayed by so many of his trade.

At first, Leicester's success was viewed as freakish, a purple patch that would soon perish. Only when they beat Chelsea 2-1 did the old glib assumptions begin to fade and their ambition taken seriously.

Top...Claudio Ranieri's Leicester led the Premier League at Christmas 2015

Maybe that's because this season it has not just been Ranieri's team challenging the status quo. Crystal Palace, West Ham United and Watford have all featured towards the top of the Premier League, while Stoke City have been an attractive force with Bojan Krkic and Xherdan Shaqiri dismantling even the best of defences.

This has combined with the implosion of Chelsea and the departure of Jose Mourinho, a curious inconsistency at both Manchester clubs and only fitful brilliance from Arsenal.

Throw in the arrival of Jurgen Klopp at Liverpool and the cocktail of shaken and stirred surprise is complete.

It can only be a welcome development for the era of the dominant "Big Four" to be threatened so severely.

English football used to have an enviable democracy of champions. From 1959 to 1965, seven different clubs won the title in seven seasons. The same happened between 1966 and 1972, with a total of 10 different teams finishing top of the table from 1959 to 1972.

Verve...Ranieri with Leicester striker Jamie Vardy

Could a similar revolution be on the cards again?

One reason for optimism is the lucrative TV rights deal that kicks in next season and has already encouraged smaller clubs to resist cashing in their best players, with Everton's refusal to sell defender John Stones to Chelsea a prime example.

The initial concern around European football about this TV deal was that it would allow the top English clubs to dominate the global transfer market and therefore success.

What an irony it would be if the actual consequence is the destabilisation of their grip on power and silverware at home.

Jim Holden

DID YOU KNOW?

Ranieri donated the proceeds from his memoir *Proud Man Walking*, which was published in 2004, to London's Great Ormond Street Hospital.

The Facts

AGE: 64 (20.10.51)
NATIONALITY: Italian
HONOURS: Serie C 1989; Serie B 1994; Italian Cup 1996; Italian Super Cup 1996; Spanish Cup 1999; UEFA Super Cup 2004; Ligue 2 2013

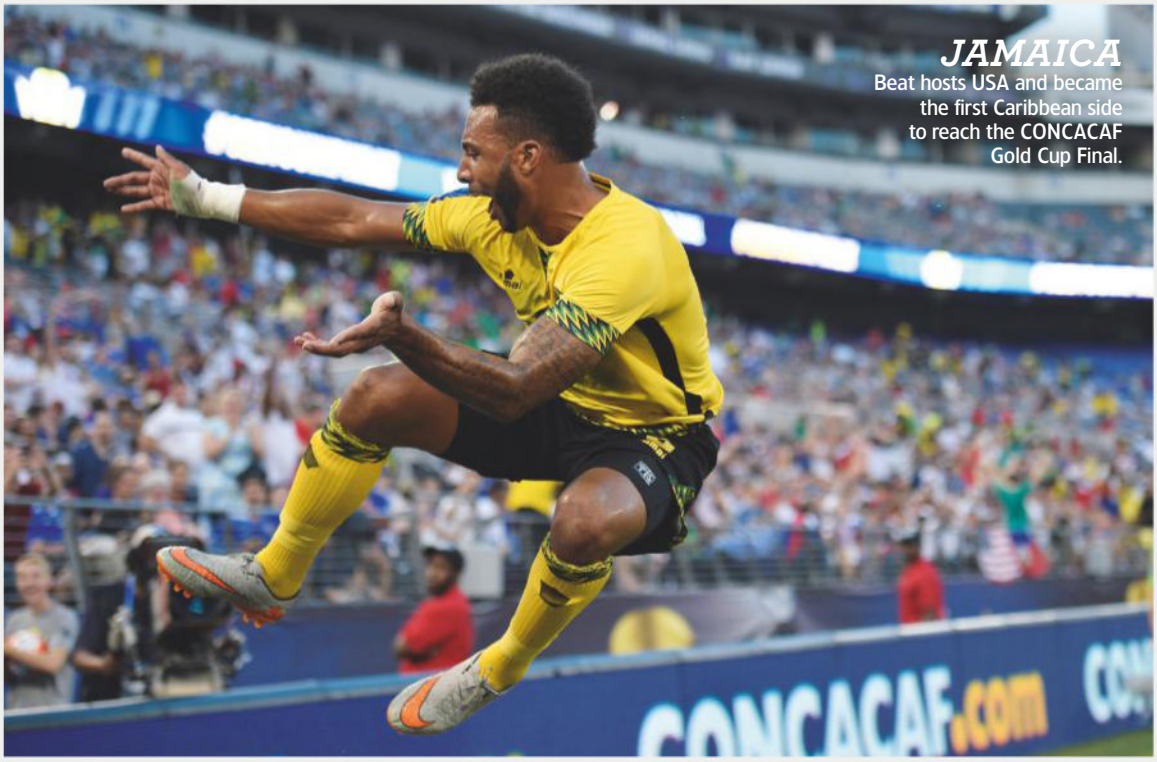
"Claudio Ranieri is clearly experienced, but this is an uninspired choice by Leicester. It's amazing how the same old names keep getting a go on the managerial merry-go-round"

Gary Lineker's initial reaction to Leicester's appointment of Ranieri

Heroes & Villains

Stars of the past 12 months

The FIFA hall of shame



JAMAICA

Beat hosts USA and became the first Caribbean side to reach the CONCACAF Gold Cup Final.

XAVI

The 35-year-old midfielder left Barcelona after winning 24 trophies during his time at the club.

RAUL

The former Real Madrid and Spain forward retired at the age of 38 after helping New York Cosmos win the NASL Championship.

JOSH MAGENNIS

The Kilmarnock striker, who was on the bench as a substitute keeper for Cardiff City in a 2007 League Cup tie, scored the crucial goal that secured Northern Ireland's qualification for Euro 216.

ROGERIO CENI

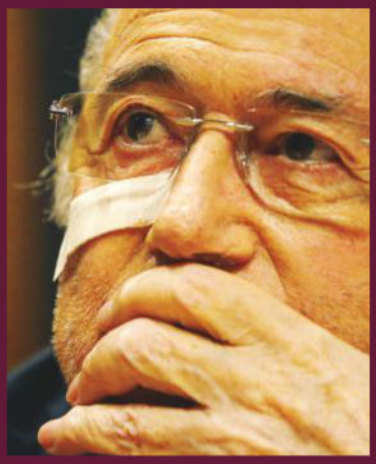
Sao Paulo's goalscoring keeper retired after a career spanning 1,250 games – and 131 goals.

LARS LAGERBECK & HEIMIR HALLGRIMSSON

The joint coaching team oversaw Iceland's incredible qualification for Euro 2016.

BANNED/SUSPENDED BY FIFA

SEPP BLATTER *Switzerland*
FIFA president
MICHEL PLATINI *France*
UEFA president
JEROME VALCKE *France*
FIFA secretary-general


Gone...Sepp Blatter was banned for eight years

ARRESTED IN ZURICH IN MAY

JEFFREY WEBB *Cayman Islands*
Former head of CONCACAF and FIFA vice-president
EUGENIO FIGUEREDO *Uruguay*
Former Uruguay FA boss and outgoing FIFA vice-president
EDUARDO LI *Costa Rica*
FIFA ExCo member
JOSE MARIA MARIN *Brazil*
Former federation president
JULIO ROCHA *Nicaragua*
President of the Nicaragua FA
COSTAS TAKKAS *Cayman Islands*
Former general-secretary of the Cayman Islands FA
RAFAEL ESQUIVEL *Venezuela*
Venezuela federation head

INDICTED BY THE FBI IN MAY

JACK WARNER *Trinidad & Tobago*
Former CONCACAF president and FIFA vice-president
NICOLAS LEOZ *Paraguay*
Former president of the Paraguayan and South American federation, and former FIFA ExCo member
ALEJANDRO BURZACO *Argentina*
Sports marketing executive
AARON DAVIDSON *USA*
President of the North American Soccer League and Traffic Sports USA
HUGO JINKIS *Argentina*
CEO of Full Play Group, TV rights company
MARIANO JINKIS *Argentina*
Son of Hugo
JOSE MARGULIES *Brazil*
Alleged "intermediary"

FBI INFORMANTS

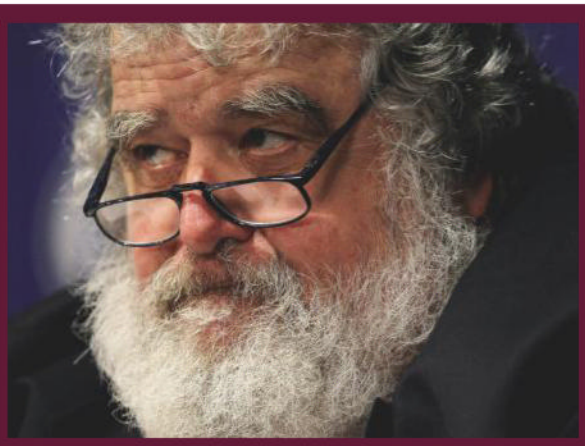
CHUCK BLAZER *USA*
Former CONCACAF general-secretary and FIFA ExCo member
JOSE HAWILLA *Brazil*
Former head of Traffic
DARYL WARNER *Trinidad & Tobago*
Eldest son of Jack Warner
DARYAN WARNER *Trinidad & Tobago*
Younger son of Jack Warner

ARRESTED IN ZURICH IN DECEMBER

JUAN ANGEL NAPOUT *Paraguay*
President of CONMEBOL
ALFREDO HAWITT *Honduras*
President of CONCACAF

INDICTED BY THE FBI IN DECEMBER 2015

ARIEL ALVARADO *Panama*
Federation president
RAFAEL CALLEJAS *Honduras*
Former federation president and former president of the Republic of Honduras
BRAYAN JIMENEZ *Guatemala*
Federation president


Whistle-blower... Chuck Blazer

Power...former Honduras president Rafael Callejas

RAFAEL SALGUERO *Guatemala*
Former FIFA ExCo member and federation president
HECTOR TRUJILLO *Guatemala*
Federation general-secretary
REYNALDO VASQUEZ *El Salvador*
Former federation president
MANUEL BURGA *Peru*
Former federation president
CARLOS CHAVEZ *Bolivia*
CONMEBOL treasurer and former federation president
LUIS CHIRIBOGA *Ecuador*
Federation president
MARCO POLO DEL NERO *Brazil*
Federation president. Announced his resignation from FIFA ExCo on November 26, 2015.
EDUARDO DELUCA *Argentina*
Former CONMEBOL general-secretary
JOSE LUIS MEISZNER *Argentina*
CONMEBOL general-secretary
ROMER OSUNA *Bolivia*
Former CONMEBOL treasurer
RICARDO TEIXEIRA *Brazil*
Former federation president and FIFA ExCo member

Gesture...disgraced former CONCACAF president Jack Warner leaves the magistrates court in Port of Spain, Trinidad

Less is more

These days, says Jonathan Wilson, not having the ball seems preferable to being in possession

Leicester City's victory over Chelsea in December felt like a distillation of the Premier League season so far. It wasn't just that Chelsea looked anxious and disjointed, or that Jamie Vardy and Riyad Mahrez, scored excellent goals; it was that, once again, the team with less possession were victorious.

It becoming an increasing trend. That weekend, the only sides in the Premier League to have more possession than their opponents and win were Arsenal and Watford. Perhaps not insignificantly, they were playing the bottom two sides in the division. Even Manchester City had less of the ball – although only just: 49.9 per cent to 50.1 per cent – in overcoming Swansea City. Liverpool, meanwhile, failed to beat West Bromwich Albion despite having 68 per cent possession.

The only game that followed what might be termed a traditional pattern of one side dominating and turning that control into chances and goals was Arsenal's 2-0 victory at a dismal Aston Villa.

That goes hand in hand with another trend in the Premier League this season. After every side had played 16 games, 37.5 per cent of matches had finished in home wins and 33.75 per cent in away wins, against an average over the past decade of 46.9 per cent home wins and 28.1 per cent away wins. It's true that the pattern was more pronounced earlier in the season, and home wins have made a surge of late but as the Premier League approached its halfway point that's a striking shift. Home advantage, it would seem, is less significant than it once was.

The reasons that home advantage has become less important is readily explicable, as travel is easier and quicker now than it was a century ago, teams can afford to stay in the best hotels, sports science has advanced to improve preparation, and stadiums and pitches are far more homogenised than they were, with conditions far more standardised.

This season, however, the change, would appear to be related to tactics.

This is an age in which dominating possession is not merely not a guarantee of victory, but seems to make winning harder.

More and more teams are counter-attacking successfully and, given that it's customary for the home side to look to take the initiative, that perhaps explains why fewer home teams are winning.

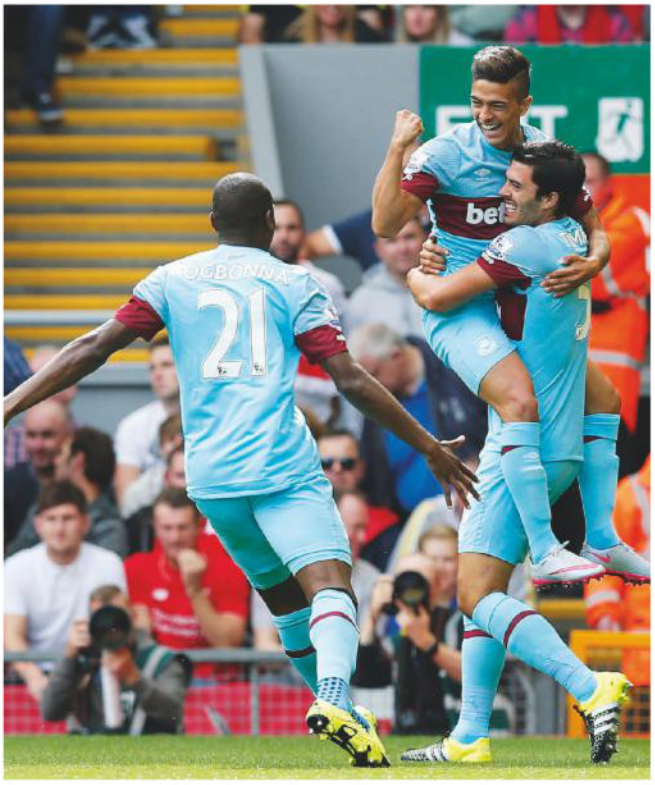
The Premier League this season is packed with good counter-attacking teams: Leicester, Crystal Palace and West Ham United have all achieved notable results away from home. Watford essentially beat the sides below them and lose to the sides above them, but they too are a team that plays on the counter, as are West Brom, inconsistent as they have been.

Yet there is a paradox here. For all the pundits' talk about the importance of transitions, and for all that anybody watching Leicester this season must have had the sense of a side that sits deep and springs forward thrillingly, according to Opta, only 4.7 per cent of Premier League goals so far this season have come from counters – Leicester, with four, have scored the most. While that is up on the 3.8 per cent of last season, it's down on the 5.4 per cent of the previous campaign.

Opta's definition of what constitutes a goal scored on the counter is very strict, so it's important when making comparisons to do so within the same data provider.

UEFA's figures for what's happening in the Champions League, though, are telling.

There is a section in the report on last season's competition headed "Counters are key" in which the former Werder Bremen coach Thomas Schaaf makes the point that Barcelona – who under Pep Guardiola were the kings of the beautiful attrition of possession – have added counters to their game thanks to the ace of their forward line and the willingness of



Away success...West Ham United's Manuel Lanzini celebrates scoring at Liverpool

Decisive...Riyad Mahrez (in blue) scores for Leicester against Chelsea

Ivan Rakitic to play risky forward passes.

But it also notes that 20.6 per cent of goals from open play were scored from counters, down from 23 per cent in 2013-14 and 27 per cent the season before that. It is also worth noting, with the caveat that the definition of a counter may be a little different, that a report in 2005-06 by UEFA technical director Andy Roxburgh suggested as many as 40 per cent of all goals from open play came from counter-attacks. In other words, what we're seeing is that, despite the perception that more teams are getting better at countering, the proportion of goals scored on the counter is dropping.

It must be acknowledged that the Champions League is not the Premier League and that in Europe's premier club competition the better teams are better and the worse teams are worse.

> Dominating possession is not merely not a guarantee of victory, it seems to make winning harder

Press...Bayern Munich (in red) pressurise Dinamo Zagreb

It's also apparent that the teams whose counter-attacking has been most eye-catching this season are those from what might be termed the Premier League's middle-class who, partly because of their own performances and partly because of under-performance from the elite, have imposed themselves to a greater extent than usual.

But the incompatibility of the statistics and the perception probably lies in the difficulty of defining a counter, particularly given the rise of *gegenpressing*. A key part of the style of both Guardiola and Jurgen Klopp is to try to win the ball back immediately after it is lost, thus stifling a counter from the opposition while potentially initiating one of their own. Is a counter-counter still a counter? And what if the counter-counter is countered?

There's a further logical difficulty with the rise of countering and counter-countering, which is what happens when two teams whose game is based on countering meet. If neither particularly wants the ball, the game becomes a game of chicken, with each side urging the other to make the first move.

After the era of radical possession, it feels that football has moved into a new age, one on which not having the ball has become preferable to having it. WS

TOMORROW'S STARS TODAY

Talentscout [WINGERS]

WORDS: Nick Bidwell

Goncalo GUEDES

Age 19 (29.11.96), Benfica & Portugal

IN A SENTENCE

In his first full season in Benfica's first team, he has dazzled with his finishing and stunning skills, scored the winner in a Champions League win at Atletico Madrid and made his senior debut for Portugal.

WHAT THEY SAY

Joao Barbosa, his former coach with Benfica's under-9s: "He was just really happy to play football. So self-contained and independent. He was very focused on his game and what he needed to do. He seemed like a small adult."

Former Benfica coach, Jorge Jesus: "He is at least two years ahead of everyone in his age group."

Jorge Simao, coach Pacos de Ferreira, after losing to a Guedes-inspired Benfica this term: "We were beaten by the pure talent of a fantastic footballer. Such individual talent makes all the difference in an even contest."

THE STORY SO FAR

From the town of Benavente, some 30km to the north-east of Lisbon, he was on Benfica's radar at the age of five and officially joined their schoolboy section three years later. At 15, he left home to board at the club's academy in Seixal and made his first-team debut in a domestic cup game against Covilha in October 2014. He became a Primeira Liga player in January 2015, in a game against Penafiel, and has represented Portugal at every international level from under-15 upwards, winning his first senior cap in a friendly with Russia in November.

> He is at least two years ahead of everyone in his age group"
> **Ex-Benfica boss Jorge Jesus**

THE NEXT STEP

Despite many Spanish and English clubs showing a keen interest in the teenager, he is no hurry to quit the Estadio da Luz. Benfica from top to toe, he is more concerned at the moment with holding down a regular first-team spot and trying to win some silverware with the club. Under contract until 2021, his release clause comes in at a whopping €60million. In the future he could possibly develop into a false nine.

STRENGTHS

He possesses blistering pace, great technical dexterity and fine dribbling skills. On the ball, he has an excellent range of pass, a seeming sixth-sense awareness of runners around him, and is cool and accurate when going for goal. Clever positionally, he also works hard in defensive mode and is a team player par excellence.

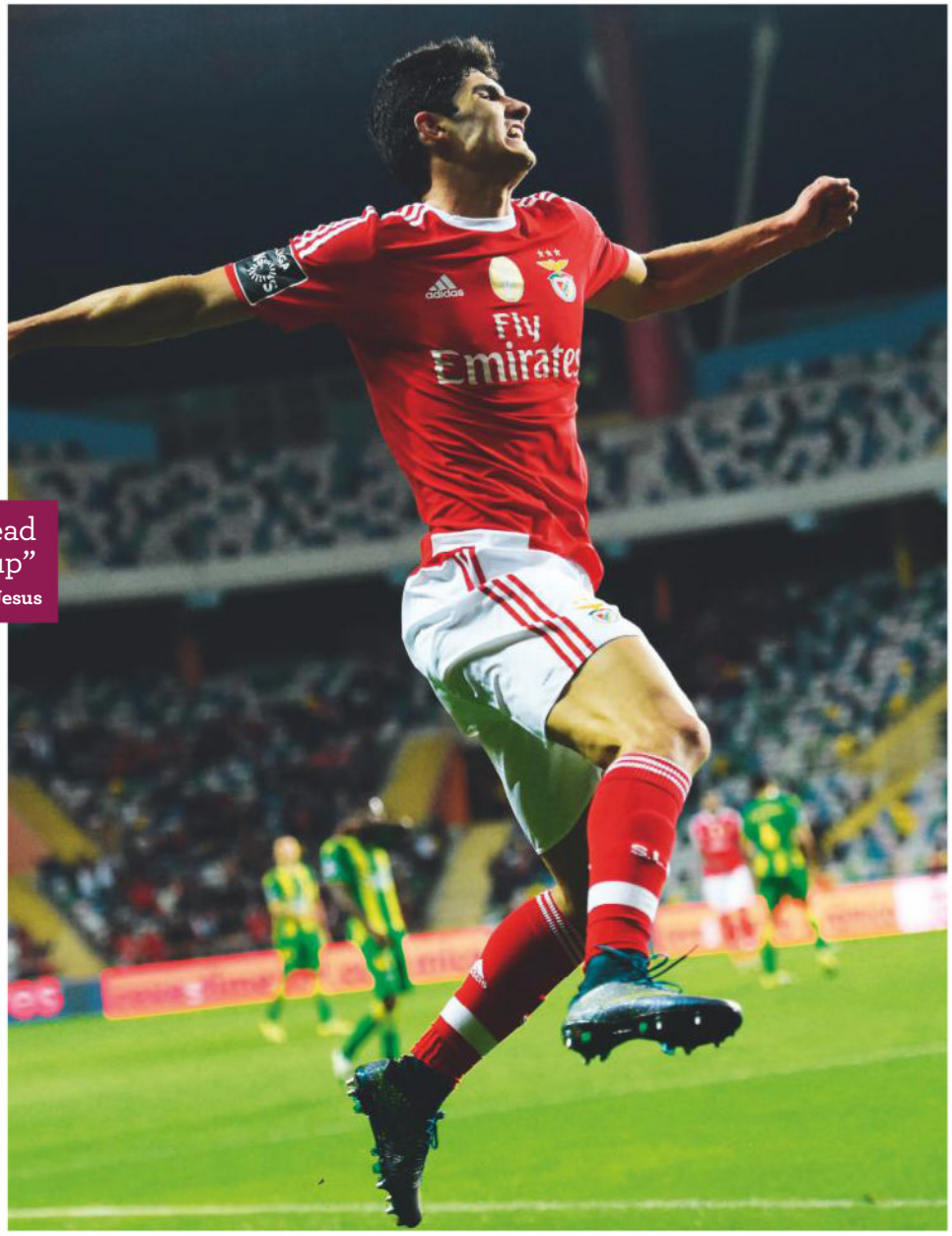
WEAKNESSES

Still to fully mature physically and must work on his endurance. Arguably could use a touch more devilment in his play.

Debut...winning his first cap for Portugal

3 THINGS YOU DIDN'T KNOW ABOUT GUEDES

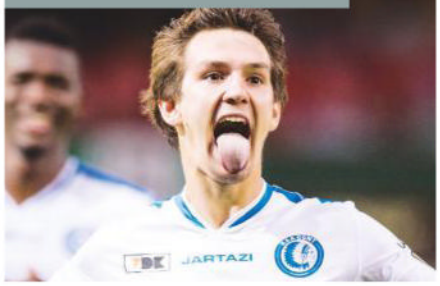
- In November, he became the first 18-year-old to be called up to Portugal's senior international squad since Cristiano Ronaldo in 2003.
- He is the youngest-ever Portuguese goalscorer in the Champions League, finding the net against Atletico Madrid, in September, when just 18 years and 301 days old.
- He played a prominent role as Benfica claimed the runners-up spot in the 2013-14 UEFA Youth League.



Hector VILLALBA

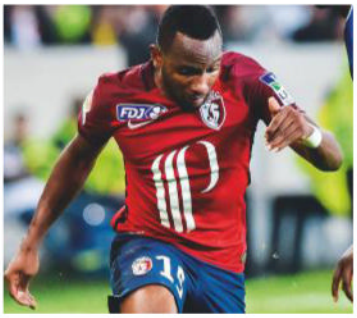
Age 21 (26.07.94), San Lorenzo & Argentina
The diminutive "Tito" has made a big impact with his pace, quick feet and explosive finishing. At his most dangerous when sprinting into open spaces, he was a 2014 Libertadores Cup winner and is the son-in-law of Antonio Mohamed, a former coach of San Lorenzo's rivals Huracan.

Benito RAMAN



Age 21 (07.11.94), Gent & Belgium
A homegrown starlet in Gent's first Belgian title last season, he is one of the quickest in the league. A first-teamer since the age of 16, he is, however, prone to inconsistency and coach Hein Vanhaezebrouck had to publicly admonish him this term after he was caught playing snooker in a bar just a few hours before an away trip.

Lenny NANGIS



Age 21 (24.03.94), Lille & France
The French under-21 right-winger has pace, trickery and consummate crossing ability. Born in Guadeloupe, he joined Caen at 15, despite interest from Barcelona and Bordeaux, and moved to Lille this season. He shone at the 2011 World Under-17 Championship and won a silver medal at the European Under-19 finals in 2013.

Uffe BECH

Age 22 (13.01.93), Hanover (Ger) & Denmark
Banned for three weeks by his club this autumn for going to a nightclub while on sick leave, he could not have made a worse start to life in the Bundesliga following a €2million move from Nordsjaelland. However, he seems to have learnt his lesson and now looks the part. A semi-finalist with Denmark's under-21s at the 2015 Euros, he won his first senior cap in October 2014.

Gaston PEREIRO

Age 20 (11.06.95), PSV (Hol) & Uruguay
A left-footer who prefers the right flank, he arrived in Eindhoven this summer in a €7million deal from Nacional and he has settled well, getting to grips with the demands of the Eredivisie and Champions League, and endearing himself to PSV fans with both goals in a 2-1 away win at Ajax.

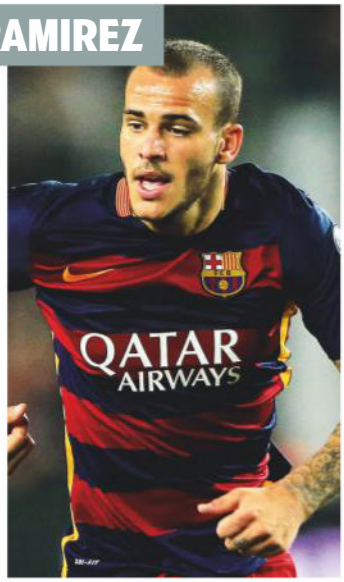
Matias NAHUEL

Age 19 (22.10.96), Villarreal & Spain
Born in Argentina but on the books of Villarreal since the age of 12, he was granted Spanish citizenship in 2014 and helped the under-19s claim the European title in July 2015. Made his Liga debut aged just 17, in January 2014 and has since been capped by Spain at under-21 level.

Federico BERNARDESCHI

Age 21 (16.02.94), Fiorentina & Italy
Spent much of his time at the *Viola* academy operating behind the strikers, but the bulk of his senior career he has been a left-footed right-winger who loves nothing more than to cut inside. Having impressed at the Viareggio youth tournament and during a loan spell at Serie B side Crotone, Italy coach Cesare Prandelli invited him to join a pre-World Cup 2014 training camp. Turned down an approach from Manchester United as a teenager.

Sandro RAMIREZ



Age 20 (09.07.95), Barcelona & Spain
For all his ability in a central striking role – as witnessed by a hat-trick against Villanovense in this season's Spanish Cup – the Canary Islander has tended to be used on the flanks by Barca B and the first team. Due to a limited amount of playing time, speculation is rife that the Spanish under-21 will soon move on. It would be a wrench if he did as he has been at the club since he was 14.

World Soccer vintage 38 years ago

January 1978

Argentina prepares to host the World Cup finals

At the start of a World Cup year, the January issue took an early look ahead to the forthcoming global tournament in Argentina, with Mexico featured on the front cover.

Inside, Eric Weil interviewed Cesar Luis Menotti, the coach of the host nation who, six months down the line, would lead Argentina to glory.

"Menotti's contract with the Argentinian FA runs until after the World Cup," wrote Weil. "And he is already the longest serving national coach in the country's 47 years of professional soccer.

"He was about to leave on a trip to Europe to see probable World Cup rivals and watch Argentine players with European clubs who he may ask to join the squad."

Menotti explained to Weil: "I think I have 15 players already and I'm sure there are no better ones in their positions in the country. But that means that I may still be short 60 per cent of my final team.

"I must have the final 22 when we start the final training stage in February."

He made the point that home-based players such as Osvaldo Ardiles and Rene Houseman – who both played for Huracan and would both feature throughout the tournament – were "week after week fighting a battle to avoid relegation". He went on to admit: "When they come to me they are obviously not in the right shape of mind for the attacking soccer I want."

Menotti also expressed his fears for his side ahead of the summer: "We can't go into a World Cup with tactics which are played by most of our league clubs: high passes into the goalmouth in the hope that somebody will head them in... everybody defend and hope a fast counter attack will catch the opposition unaware.

"I don't want this to be the image of Argentine soccer. With the national team I would like to destroy old theories which are no longer of any use.

"I would like to show that we can win by playing good attacking soccer."

Weil pointed out that while Menotti "admires Holland's 'total football' which almost won the last World Cup, the Argentinian boss didn't have at his disposal "the players with the physical or mental state for it".

Menotti revealed: "If I had a [Johan] Cruyff, and maybe a couple of other stars from that Dutch team, it would give my team the character it lacks, the leader it badly needs, and I would build the team around them, because it would be a mistake and a waste to expect them to mould into the team."

However, six months later Menotti would lead his team to glory in Buenos Aires, where they beat Holland – who were without the absent Johan Cruyff, 3-1 after extra time in the Final. WS

Plans...Argentina coach Cesar Luis Menotti offered his thoughts on that summer's World Cup

SIX WORLD SOCCER, January, 1978

ERIC WEIL World Soccer's chief South American correspondent talks to CESAR LUIS MENOTTI Team manager of Argentina

'We can wi good attac

TALKING to Cesar Luis Menotti, the 38-year-old coach of Argentina's national soccer team, may not be very enlightening these days, because you either get the impression that you've heard it all before or that some time back he had different ideas.

Menotti is the most criticised and most interviewed man in Argentina today together with economy minister Jorge Martinez de Hoz — which is merely proof that soccer and the country's economic crisis carry equal interest for the man in the street. Menotti rarely refuses to open his mind to any reporter asking for an interview, yet he has often been misquoted. But when you are asked the same questions week after week it is difficult to give exactly the same answers every time . . . and in three years you are entitled to change your mind.

I talked to the lanky coach three years almost to the day after he took over the national team for a match against Spain here in October 12, 1974. Since then the team has played 32 full international games, winning 18, drawing seven and losing seven with a 64-33 goals record — a performance which would satisfy most, but not the majority of Argentina's 25 million population for whom soccer is almost a religion and the national team a special "club" which must win every time.

Menotti's contract with the Argentine Football Association runs until after the World Cup and he is already the longest serving regular national team coach in the country's 47 years of professional soccer. He was about to leave on a two-months trip to Europe to see probable World Cup rivals in action and watch Argentine players with European clubs who he may ask to join the squad.

Is he satisfied with what he has achieved in these three years?

In spite of all the setbacks he seemed as keen as ever to create a new image for Argentine soccer. The setbacks include the frequent difficulties of getting the squad together for training because of club commitments in the excessively long Argentine league season, shortage of international fixtures, the loss of key players sold to foreign clubs and the fact that he wants his team to play attacking soccer with players drawn from clubs which week after week play defensive and destroying tactics in the league.

In spite of his three years in charge

Argentina national coach Cesar Luis Menotti being interviewed in his office at the Argentine Football Association.

> **"If I had a Cruyff, and maybe a couple of other stars from that Dutch team, it would give my team the character it lacks"**
>
> Argentina coach Cesar Luis Menotti

WORLD SOCCER, January, 1978 SEVEN

n by playing king soccer'

of the team — which he compares to only four months work with a club team under him continuously — he says he has not had enough time, but he hasn't given up.

"When I look on this job I presented my plan for continual work and international games which is the only way to get good results. I even handed the Argentine FA a programme for 1979 although I am sure Menotti will not be in charge then. I remember that in 1962 we lost a World Cup with a coach (Juan Carlos Lorenzo) who we kicked out afterwards and four years later we called him back to put him in charge of the team only three months before another World Cup. Without wishing to discuss the capacity of this person, I think we made him lose at least two years work," Menotti says.

"In three years," he added, "I have had time to look for good individual players and try out as many as possible so as to be left with no doubts. This has however only been partly accomplished. I would have liked to select my final team at the beginning of the year (1977), but this was not possible because we were unable to arrange a tour during the second part of 1976 and because a lot of my players were transferred to foreign clubs."

Critics

"I think I have 15 players already and I'm sure there are no better ones in their positions in the country. But that means that I may still be short 60 per cent of my final team — something the critics should remember. I must have the final 22 when we start the final training stage on February 22."

On his European trip — he left on October 9 — Menotti intended to watch defender Enrique Wolff (with Real de Madrid), half Osvaldo Piazza (St Etienne) and forward Mario Kempes (Valencia) and others, but he is mainly interested in adding these three to his squad. But he insists they must be back in Buenos Aires at least 60 days before the start of the World Cup — except for Kempes who he knows well and who could be fitted into the team 30 days before the first game.

"If this is not possible," says Menotti, "we will have to make do with the players available at home who have quite a good account of themselves in the series of home international games during the middle of the year against leading European sides (including Scotland and England) . . . in spite of what everybody says."

This series of games showed Argentina to be weak in defence (specially in the air), slow in midfield transportation and shot shy up front, but Menotti says that although his team could be meeting some of the same rivals again in next year's World Cup finals, he does not expect them to play the same way or be so hard to beat. World Cup finalists, he said, will not come here to defend with seven or eight men as the fixture system does not permit teams to play to avoid defeat if they want to advance in the competition. Critics also tend to forget, he added, that a national team, specially one preparing for a World Cup and trying out players and tactics, is not under the same obligation to win every match as a club in a competition where every point counts.

Argentina beat Poland 3-1, lost to World Cup holders West Germany 1-3, drew 1-1 with both England and Scotland, drew 0-0 with France and beat Yugoslavia 1-0 and East Germany 2-0. (Four of these countries had reached the World Cup finals at the time of writing). Yet almost the same squad seemed to have done a lot better on tour in 1976 when they beat Poland and the Soviet Union in climatic conditions totally unsuitable to them.

"Apart from the continual pressure on players when they play at home, it isn't easy to explain," says Menotti. "A number of players did a lot better last year, but now many have problems at their clubs and there is the example of the four Huracan players with the squad (goalkeeper Balay, defender Carrascosa, half Ardiles and forward Houseman) who week after week are fighting a battle to avoid relegation and when they come to me they are obviously not in the right shape of mind for the attacking soccer I want."

In that case it might have been better if next year's World Cup were played somewhere else?

"No, it will not be the same during the World Cup once the team is settled and can no longer be changed. The pressure (requesting changes) will be off," says Menotti who also pin-points the team's weakness not on any special department but on a matter of equilibrium which they tend to lose when in attack.

Menotti has sometimes been accused of being a bit soft in imposing discipline, but he says: "Whenever there's something wrong, people always want to fix it with more discipline. Discipline means running and hard work and I'm sure there isn't a team in the country which runs more and works harder than the national team. There are other teams with other characteristics in Argentina where it is easier to impose discipline.

"If I play four backs and five halves it would be easier, but we can't go into a World Cup with these tactics which are played by most of our league clubs . . . high passes into the goalmou.h in the hope that somebody will head them in . . . everybody defend and hope a fast counter attack will catch the opposition unaware.

"I don't want this to be the image of Argentine soccer. With the national team I would like to destroy old theories which are no longer of any use. I would like to show that we can win by playing good attacking soccer."

Menotti is a great admirer of Dutch soccer and such stars as Cruyff who continually cropped up in the conversation. He believes Holland are strong candidates for the next World Cup again, but he does not believe in the supremacy of the European style. He admires Holland's "total football" — there was a time when he said he didn't — which almost won the last World Cup . . . "but I haven't got the players with the physical or mental state for it . . . and never will have here," he says.

"I do want players who are athletes, but I don't want athletes trying to play soccer . . . Now if I had a Cruyff and maybe a couple of other stars from that Dutch team, it would give my team the character it lacks, the leader it badly needs and I would build the team around them, because it would be a mistake and a waste to expect them to mould into the team."

One fundamental difference between Argentine and European players, says Menotti, is that when an Argentine loses the ball "it takes him a minute to realise the game continues." That is his way of overdoing it to drive home his point. Argentines may play fast, but sometimes do not think fast enough.

He also says that even if a coach picks the right players, it is only 20 per cent of the job. The rest is up to the players once the match starts. During a match the coach can do no more than 5 per cent towards success ". . . and the coach who says otherwise is a liar."

Also in this issue...

p15 With Holland's talisman making himself unavailable for the World Cup, Peter Bills asked: "Will Anderlecht winger Robbie Rensenbrink become the new Johan Cruyff? The Dutchman has the class and ability to become an important part of the World Cup effort next June. But as to what extent Holland can look to Rensenbrink depends greatly on his own morale and ambition."

p26-27 Derick Allsop reported on an unlikely Asian success, commenting: "Iran's qualification for Argentina has offered the world tangible proof of their emergence in international football. The day Iranians call D-day was Friday November 25. Friday is the day of worship and football and this Friday was especially significant in both senses. The pilgrims were returning from Mecca and at 4pm Iran faced Australia knowing a win would complete the long trek to Argentina."

p12-13 A report by Keir Radnedge focused on the demise of an "ailing, ageing Bayern Munich" who had seen Franz Beckenbauer join New York Cosmos and Paul Breitner move to Real Madrid, coupled with the fact that stalwarts Sepp Maier, Gerd Muller and Hans-Georg Schwarzenbeck were all over or approaching 30-years-old.

p32 In Argentina, River Plate had just won a 14th title, which as Eric Weil pointed out "is more than any other club and twice more than their close rivals Boca Juniors".

10 years ago

An unlikely duo of Steve Staunton and former England manager Bobby Robson were unveiled as the new management team of the Republic of Ireland. It was Staunton's first foray into football management and Robson was employed in an advisory capacity.

20 years ago

Kevin Keegan's Newcastle United had opened up a nine-point lead on nearest challengers Manchester United and had a game in hand at the top of the Premier League. However, it would all fall apart as Alex Ferguson's side went on to win the title by four points.

30 years ago

Gerard Houllier, who had taken Lens into the French top flight the previous season before becoming coach of Paris Saint-Germain, had guided his new team to the top of the Ligue 1 table and had a first championship in his sights for the club from the French capital.

40 years ago

Rodney Marsh explained why he turned down a move to Anderlecht, where he could have lined up in that May's European Cup winners Cup Final. Instead, by the end of the month, he had gone to the United States and signed for Tampa Bay Rowdies in the NASL.

50 years ago

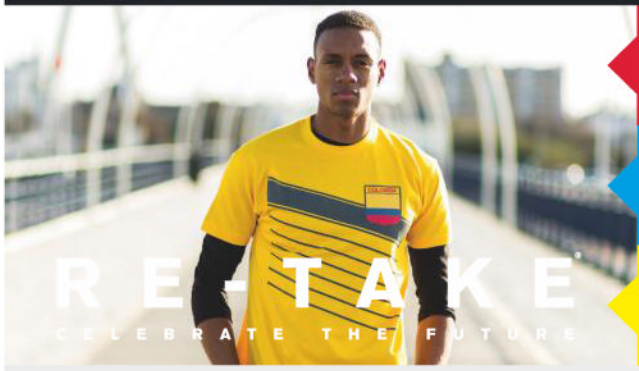
Italy coach Edmondo Fabbri was given a five-year extension to his contract by the Italian Football Association – which would see him through two World Cups, in 1966 and 1970 – in an attempt to stave off several rich Italian club sides who were after his services.

TEL: 0845 8382442
EMAIL: SALES@SUBSIDE.CO.UK
WEB: SUBSIDE.CO.UK

facebook.com/subsidesports

twitter.com/subsidesports

THE COMPLETE GUIDE TO OFFICIAL WORLDWIDE FOOTBALL PRODUCTS



UP TO 70% OFF SELECTED RE-TAKE T-SHIRTS!

WE ONLY STOCK THE OFFICIAL PSPRO PLAYER SIZE PREMIER LEAGUE PRINTING FOR ADULT SHIRTS!

VISIT OUR WEBSITE: WWW.SUBSIDE.CO.UK
We pride ourselves in sourcing official replica, limited editions and exclusive products from around the globe.

14-15 Napoli Home Europa League
£24.99 macron

14-15 Napoli Home Europa League + Higuain
£34.99 macron

14-15 Napoli Home Europa League Shorts
£4.99 macron

14-15 Real Madrid Home Shirt + FIFA Badge
£24.99 adidas

14-15 Real Madrid Home Shirt + FIFA, Balon D'Or & Ronaldo
£34.99 adidas

SUBSIDE SPORTS LTD: TEL: 0845 8382442 / EMAIL: SALES@SUBSIDE.CO.UK / WEB: SUBSIDE.CO.UK

FREE
FOOTBALL PROGRAMMES

To receive a FREE programme plus a copy of our latest catalogue (listing several thousand different mint condition Big Match, League, Scottish, Irish, Foreign and Non-League teams programmes etc.) please send your name and address to:

STEVE EARL FOOTBALL PROGRAMMES (DEPT.WS)
BROAD STREET, BUNGAY, SUFFOLK, NR35 1AH, ENGLAND
or phone 01986 892621 or visit www.footballprogs.co.uk
2015 England v France £8 (inc.p&p)
2015 Spain v England £9.50 (inc.p&p)
(Credit/Debit Cards & PayPal accepted)

England's world cup story on a bog roll.
It's not all crap, honest!

Buy the perfect gift this Christmas.
£5.99
crapgoods.com
BRITAIN'S NO.2™
FREE SHIPPING IN THE UK

★ Interstar ★

Interstar is a play by email game based on real life world football, managed by real managers. You manage a team and compete against other managers, buy and sell players, sign exciting new players and build a reserve squad. Pick the team, choose formations, tactics, juggle injuries and disciplinary problems to make your team a success.

Can you make your team the best?

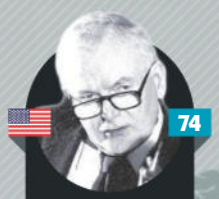
It's all up to you – you are manager, chairman, secretary, coach and director of football all in one.

Contact interstar2013@gmail.com for more details and prove you are one of the best in football management.

World Service

NOW INCORPORATING Global diary

Exclusive reports from our worldwide network of correspondents



PAUL GARDNER — USA — 74

GAVIN HAMILTON — Champions League — 82

HOWARD JOHNSON — France — 84

TIM VICKERY — Brazil — 72

SID LOWE — Spain — 86

STEVE MENARY — Tajikistan — 81

MIKE PLASTOW — Japan — 76

PLUS

Corinthians... champions of Brazil 72

PREVIEW

68 Albania
69 Germany
70 Poland
71 Romania

REVIEW

72 Brazil
74 USA
76 Japan
78 South America round-up

DIARY

80 Comprehensive global news

CLUB FOOTBALL

88 ESM XI
89 Results, tables, fixtures

SQUADS

94 La Liga
96 Serie A

ALBANIA

Historic first qualification for central Europeans

OVERVIEW

Albania, with players spread around Europe, secured an historic first-ever qualification for a major finals with key wins over Portugal and Armenia.

Few people gave Albania a hope of making it out of a qualifying group that also featured Portugal, Denmark and Serbia. But a stunning 1-0 away win over Portugal in their first game, thanks to a goal from Bekim Balaj, gave them an unlikely platform from which to launch their campaign.

Home and away draws with Denmark helped to sustain their leading position in the group. They were given a huge boost when awarded all three points after their match against Serbia in Belgrade was abandoned when a drone carrying a flag featuring Albanian nationalist symbols was flown above the pitch.

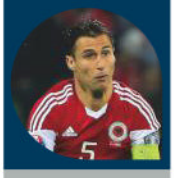
Albania, with a population of just two million, was a secretive communist state until the 1990s. In 1999, the Kosovan war spread the Albanian diaspora around Europe and almost half the current team were born or have roots in Kosovo.

Clash...tempers fray against Serbia (in white)

TACTICS

Albania scored the fewest number of goals (10) of any of the finalists in qualifying. However, they also had one of the tightest defences, conceding just five. Coach Biasi's emphasis on defensive discipline means the 4-2-3-1 formation is in reality 4-5-1, with emphasis on swift counter attacks.

STAR MAN



Lorik CANA

Kosovo-born national team captain who has played for leading clubs in France, England, Turkey and Italy.

COACH

Gianni DI BIASI

Italian, much-travelled former Torino and Udinese coach who was appointed by the Albanian FA in December 2011.

PLAYER PROFILE

In charge...Taulant Xhaka takes control during a qualifier against Denmark

TAULANT XHAKA

Ragip Xhaka was a busy man in October 2015. He travelled to St Gallen to watch his younger son Granit play for Switzerland as they confirmed their qualification for Euro 2016. Two days later, he was in Armenia to see his other son Taulant play an important role in Albania's first-ever qualification.

"I have one son playing for Albania, one for Switzerland – it's the perfect reflection of our family," Ragip said. The draw for this summer's finals, pitting Albania against Switzerland in Lens on June 11, will at least save him some travel costs.

Born in Basle after their parents fled Kosovo in the 1980s, the Xhakas will be the first brothers to be playing for opposing sides at a European Championship.

While Granit is well established in the Bundesliga for Borussia Monchengladbach and for the Swiss national side, versatile Basle defender Taulant opted to play for Albania and was a key figure in defensive midfield in the remarkable Euro 2016 qualifying campaign.

Taulant represented Switzerland at all youth levels before answering the call from Albania coach Gianni Di Biasi who has expanded his options by recruiting players from the Europe-wide Albanian diaspora. Even though that will mean split loyalties for the Xhaka family at Euro 2016.

John Holmesdale

GERMANY

World champions among the favourites to win in France

OVERVIEW

Joachim Low's side have seen some changes since winning the World Cup. Despite problems in qualifying, they will be among the favourites in France.

- Germany qualified as winners of their group, ahead of Poland, Republic of Ireland and Scotland. But it was far from plain sailing. They suffered defeats in Poland and Ireland and did not confirm qualification until the final matchday.
- Joachim Low has overseen a number of personnel changes since the World Cup. Bastian Schweinsteiger is now captain following the retirement of Philipp Lahm, while Per Mertesacker and Miroslav Klose also stepped down.
- Marco Reus is back after missing the World Cup because of injury, while the returning Ilkay Gundogan impressed in the defeat of Scotland in September 2015.
- New faces include Bayer Leverkusen midfielder Karim Bellarabi, Wolfsburg forward Max Kruse and Cologne full-back Jonas Hector, while midfielder Julian Draxler is ready to play more of a role than his substitute minutes at the 2014 World Cup.

Relief...Germany celebrate beating Scotland

TACTICS

Germany have a settled formation and plenty of attacking options. The main weakness is at full-back. Emre Can failed to impress there, while Hector has made mistakes at left-back, prompting suggestions that Lahm could be asked to reconsider his retirement.

STAR MAN

Thomas MULLER

Still only 26, the prolific and versatile Bayern Munich forward is already a veteran of two World Cup campaigns.

COACH

Joachim LOW

World Cup-winning boss who recently extended his contract until 2018 despite speculation he might seek a club job.

PLAYER PROFILE

Hard hitting...nothing less than victory in France will satisfy Jerome Boateng

JEROME BOATENG

While his *Nationalmannschaft* central defensive partner Mats Hummels stutters and stumbles for Borussia Dortmund, the Bayern Munich rock continues to go from strength to strength.

After starting out in the international arena as an emergency full-back, the 27-year-old Berliner only became an automatic choice as back-line nexus during the knockout stage of the last World Cup. In the opinion of many, he was Man of the Match in the Final victory over Argentina.

It's amazing the strides he has made in the last couple of years. No more lapses in concentration and inexplicable off days. Just the relentless pursuit of excellence; the complete package of strength, athleticism, intelligence and outstanding distribution, which is particularly valuable as he sprays around his trademark laser-guided long diagonal balls.

Those in the know see him as a potential captain and he clearly does relish a leadership role. He was frank and hard-hitting in his appraisal of certain poor results in qualification, believing that only first-place will suffice in France. "We have the ability in the squad to do what Spain did a few years ago: build a winning dynasty. But to get to that point we have to stay hungry. Otherwise, it won't happen."

Nick Bidwell

POLAND

The 2012 co-hosts

OVERVIEW

Inspired by top scorer Robert Lewandowski, Poland came through a tough qualifying group to reach their third successive finals.

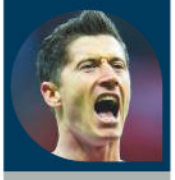
- Poland qualified for their third successive Euros after failing to reach any finals before 2008. They were co-hosts in 2012 but failed to get beyond the group stage.
- They finished second behind Germany in their qualifying group. Their key results were beating Germany 2-0 in Warsaw, a late draw against Scotland in Glasgow and a 2-1 win over Ireland in Warsaw which sealed qualification.
- Qualification was fired by Robert Lewandowski, who was top scorer in qualifying with a record-equalling 13 goals
- The campaign was marred by a fallout between Lewandowski and former Borussia Dortmund team-mate Jakub Blaszczykowski, who lost the captaincy when he was injured.
- The great goalkeeping tradition continues, with four strong options for France: Lukasz Fabianski (Swansea), Wojciech Szczesny (Roma), Artur Boruc (Bournemouth) and Przemyslaw Tyton (Stuttgart).

Bound for France...celebrating qualification

TACTICS

Poland have a strong spine in centre-back Kamil Glik, defensive midfielder Krychowiak, second striker Arkadiusz Milik and Lewandowski. Skipper Lewandowski likes to drop deep and links well with Arkadiusz Milik. Blaszczykowski could be recalled despite his rift with Lewandowski.

STAR MAN



Robert LEWANDOWSKI

Centre-forward and captain who has been in prolific form for Bayern Munich and Poland, scoring vital goals in qualification.

COACH

Adam NAWALKA

Former national team midfielder and coach of Wisla Krakow, GKS Katowice and Gornik Zabrze. Took over the national team in 2013.

PLAYER PROFILE

Fearsome...Grzegorz Krychowiak is strong in the tackle and does a fine job protecting the back four

GRZEGORZ KRYCHOWIAK

The European Championship in France will be a return to source for Poland's outstanding defensive midfielder Grzegorz Krychowiak.

A former junior and reserve team player at Bordeaux, and for five seasons a professional with Nantes and Reims, Krychowiak very much is a "Made in France" player, someone whose knowledge of the Gallic scene could prove extremely useful indeed next summer.

Winning his first full cap in a friendly versus Serbia in December 2008, the 25-year-old Pomeranian, a native of the north-west of Poland, is one of those selfless, combative and unstinting individuals that every functioning collective needs. A fearsome tackler, a master of the judicious interception and strong in the air, he does a fine job of screening the back four and also will push forward from time to time. He scored twice in qualification against Georgia and the Republic of Ireland.

In his second season with Sevilla, he was a key member of their 2015 Europa League winning side and recently signed a new contract with the club, a deal which should keep him at the Sanchez Pizjuan stadium until 2019, although there has been interest from other clubs.

Nick Bidwell

ROMANIA

Defensive-minded team in first finals since 2008

OVERVIEW

A defensive-minded Romania will compete in their first finals since 2008 after qualifying from an unexceptional group, ahead of rivals Hungary but behind Northern Ireland.

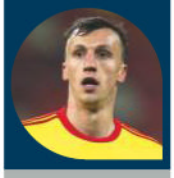
- Romania had the best defensive record in qualifying, conceding just two goals, but were also miserly at the other end, scoring 11. They endured a national-record goal drought of 428 minutes which included a run of four straight draws in the second half of the campaign.
- There is competition for the goalkeeper slot between Tatarusanu (see profile) and Sunderland's Costel Pantilimon, but elsewhere coach Anghel Iordanescu has to choose mostly from domestic-based players. That Vlad Chiriches is their star man speaks volumes about their quality.
- Many key players are ageing: captain Razvan Rat is 34, playmaker Lucian Sanmartean is 35 and holding midfielder Ovidiu Hoban is 32. Even 36-year-old Adrian Mutu, currently playing in the Indian Super League, is targetting an international return.

Solid...Mihai Pintilii (in yellow)

TACTICS

Defensive strength is the key for Iordanescu, whose current side is a far cry from the exciting Gheorghe Hagi-inspired team of the mid-1990s that he also coached. Chiriches is the central defensive lynchpin but he has struggled to get games at Napoli.

STAR MAN



Vlad CHIRICHES

Captain and centre-back who struggled to establish himself at Spurs but is the cornerstone of Romania's defence.

COACH

Anghel IORDANESCU

Veteran coach who came out of retirement to take charge of his country for a third time in October 2014.

PLAYER PROFILE

Huge presence...goalkeeper Ciprian Tatarusanu stands 6ft 6in – but his back-up, Costel Pantilimon, is even taller

CIPRIAN TATARUSANU

In distinct contrast to the flamboyant Gheorghe Hagi-inspired Romanian national team of the 1990s, today's team place much more emphasis on defensive rigour and at the heart of their "give no inch" disposition is the towering Bucharest-born goalkeeper Ciprian Tatarusanu, who in the course of the qualifying campaign, kept no fewer than seven clean sheets.

Currently earning rave reviews in Serie A with Fiorentina, the 29-year-old's strongest suit is his shot-stopping ability, his knack for vital saves at vital moments. Despite his great height, he has no trouble at all getting down to low shots, he is acrobatic, brave and agile and boasts tremendous reflexes, a legacy, no doubt, of his schoolboy days as a handball goalkeeper.

Another of his specialities is a flair for dodging penalty bullets. At former club, Steaua Bucharest, he regularly proved a spot-kick saviour, notably coming out on top in a Europa League shoot-out against Ajax in the 2012-13 season.

Born in Bucherest, Tatarusanu made more than 130 appearances for Steaua over six seasons before a 2014 move to Italy. He has been a full international for the last five years, making his senior Romania debut back in November 2010 in a friendly versus Italy.

Nick Bidwell

Brazil

TIM VICKERY

Tite's title once again

Corinthians midfield is the key as coach repeats 2012 triumph

In global terms, the last truly competitive side to come out of South America was the Corinthians team moulded by coach Tite, who won the Brazilian title in 2012 and followed it up the following year with the Libertadores Cup and Club World crown.

And after Corinthians' latest league triumph, there are hopes that Tite can do it again – and this time with much more style.

Sorry state...Vasco da Gama won the Rio title but were relegated from the national league

Tite's previous Corinthians side were solid rather than inspired. They were a team of mostly single-goal victories. After that side broke up, the coach took some time off and continued his education with a study of European club football, before returning to build a team as compact as its predecessor but far more expansive and much easier on the eye.

The key to the 2015 side was the excellence of its midfield. Ralf anchored, allowing Elias to break forward, while the star turns were the playmaking pair of Jadson and Renato Augusto – the former busy, talented and precise; the latter imposing and elegant. Some critics doubted the wisdom of trying to fit both into the same line-up, but the pair dovetailed beautifully, giving the team a quality in possession that no one else came close to matching.

Tite even shrugged off a shock Libertadores elimination in May, when Corinthians were beaten home and away by Guarani of Paraguay. By the time the league got under way, he knew his team could get better – despite the financial problems which led to the sale of Peruvian centre-forward Paolo Guerrero. He was replaced by former Brazil international Vagner Love, who was greeted with widespread scepticism but whose back-to-goal proficiency blended in well with such a gifted midfield. Love recovered his goal touch to become the league's second-top goalscorer, while teenage left-winger Malcom provided verve and pace in what was otherwise a mature, experienced team.

An intelligent group of players, with a strong belief in their coach and his methods, the title was effectively decided in early November when Corinthians visited second-place Atletico Mineiro.

Usually so strong at home, it was a game Atletico had to win, and as a side whose game is based on spasms of furious attacks, they unleashed their armoury – only for Corinthians to hold firm and pick them off in the second half to win 3-0.

It was a demoralising defeat for Atletico, who before the end of the season surprisingly sacked their coach, Levir Culpi. Amazingly, Tite was the only coach to spend the entire season in charge of the same club.

Corinthians may have been head and shoulders above the opposition, but in an era when – despite a financial advantage – Brazilian clubs have been performing so poorly in continental competitions, that is not in itself a ringing recommendation.

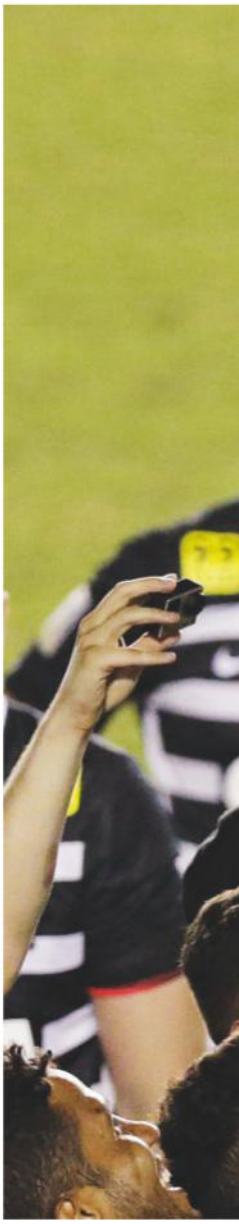
Atletico Mineiro were fiery but nowhere near as consistent as Corinthians – and there were no other real contenders. Gremio surprised perhaps even themselves by finishing third, with promising coach Roger Machado doing well despite a squad lacking strength in depth. Internacional underperformed, with the team falling to strange bouts of laziness and throwing fourth place away to Sao Paulo, who spent most of the year in political turmoil.

Other than Corinthians and Atletico Mineiro, the only team to cause general enthusiasm were Santos, who threw off a dreadful start to race up the table.

Lucas Lima pulled the strings in the Santos midfield, setting up the chances that made centre-forward Ricardo Oliveira – who was well supported by Gabriel Barbosa – the league's runaway top scorer with 20 goals. They were, however, entirely dependent on their home form, managing only one away win in their entire campaign – a defect which would also prove their undoing in the Brazilian Cup Final.

After playing their way into the top four, Santos turned their back on the league in order to concentrate on the Cup Final against Palmeiras. But after failing to make the most of home advantage and only winning 1-0 in the first leg, they performed poorly in the return and lost 2-1 before being beaten on penalties.

For Palmeiras, the cup win crowned a year in which



Lift off...Tite is acclaimed by his Corinthians side after they clinch the league title

BEST OF SEASON

● **PLAYER**
Jadson (Corinthians)
An underrated playmaker, goalscorer and fine passer of the ball who just gets the nod over imperious team-mate Renato Augusto.

● **COACH**
Tite (Corinthians)
An undisputed choice, it's a mystery why this charismatic and down-to-earth coach was overlooked for the national team job after the 2014 World Cup.

● **NEWCOMER**
Rodrigo Dourado (Internacional)
Central midfielder who is still a little coltish but highly versatile. The 21-year-old is dynamic and talented in possession.

Review

supporters had flocked to their new stadium, which is considered the most impressive of Brazil's new grounds. Indeed, of the clubs that finished in the league's top 10, only Sao Paulo and Santos did not stage some of their matches in new or refurbished arenas.

The new gleaming locations were also surely part of the explanation for the rise in crowds, with the average of just over 17,000 the highest since 2009. This is especially noteworthy as the Brazilian economy is slipping from recession into fully fledged depression.

Financial stresses make it all the more imperative to sort out one of the great problems of the Brazilian game: the calendar. The next national league does not start again until late May and until then there is the dreadful, outdated, loss-making state championships, in which the big teams waste their time taking on tiny opponents.

Increasingly clubs are waking up to this problem and starting to seek alternatives. Those clubs, though, do not include Rio giants Vasco da Gama, for whom a bungling of the calendar was a decisive factor in their third relegation in eight years.

At the start of 2015 the club's controversial president, Eurico Miranda, declared that his priority was winning the Rio State state title. This duly happened, but as soon as the national league started the team's limitations were exposed. Vasco managed just 13 points in the first half of the season. With plenty of new signings they rallied strongly under coach Jorginho, losing just one of their last 15 matches, but it was not enough to save them.

Cup winner...Palmeiras' Ze Roberto

Battle...Palmeiras defend a Santos corner

Relegated with Vasco are Goias, and two of the four-strong contingent from Santa Catarina, who always looked strong candidates for the drop. Chapecoense survived in relative comfort, while Figueirense were biting their nails until the final whistle as city rivals Avai went down, along with nearby Joinville.

In an otherwise appalling year for Rio's clubs, Botafogo bounced straight back as second division champions. They will be joined in next season's top flight by America Mineiro and, importantly, by a pair of clubs from the North East. In 2015 the region's only representatives were Sport of Recife, who finished a creditable sixth. They will be joined in the next campaign by city rivals Santa Cruz, and Vitoria from Salvador.

With three clubs from the North East taking part, the 2016 championship will take on more of a genuinely national dimension. WS

USA

PAUL GARDNER

Timbers top

Portland claim a first MLS crown

Five years after joining Major League Soccer, Portland Timbers claimed the MLS Cup for the first time, beating holders Columbus Crew 2-1 in the play-off Final. Around 2,000 Timbers fans made the long trek to the MAPFRE Stadium in Ohio and thousands more were at Portland International Airport to greet the team on their arrival home.

"This exceeds anything that I could have had in a dream," said coach Caleb Porter. "This is unbelievable. We've the best fans in Major League Soccer."

Portland were gifted their opening goal in the MLS Cup Final after 27 seconds when Crew keeper Steve Clark took too long to clear his lines and Diego Valeri charged down his kick. The ball rolled into the net for the fastest goal in MLS Cup history.

Rodney Wallace added a second six minutes later, with Kei Kamara replying for Columbus, but it was Valeri who took the plaudits.

"This is special for us," said the 29-year-old Argentinian striker, who was named the game's Most Valuable Player. "I'm really thankful. I'm happy for myself and my team-mates."

Valeri, who missed the start of the season through injury, was one of 14 of the 22 players starting the Final who were born overseas, and if MLS is to grow, young American players must start to break through.

For a growing league – and MLS is still very much in that category – a season without any major growing-pain crises can be viewed as a pretty successful one. And in 2015, things were actually a lot better than the mere absence of problems.

The continued expansion of the league stands out as the biggest success story. MLS commissioner Don Garber likes to recall the days when he joined the league in 1999 as a time "when we couldn't give our franchises away". Now it seems that barely a month goes by without an announcement of a newly interested city applying for a franchise.

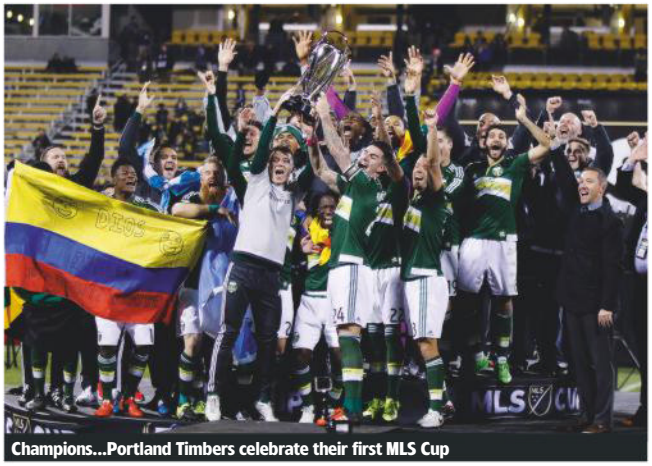
The league now stands at 20 teams, the same as most top European leagues, but the USA is an enormous country and 20 is simply not enough. Among the other pro sports, baseball and basketball each have 30 teams, while (gridiron) football has 32.

MLS is slowly but surely heading for the 30 mark and has announced plans for a 24-team league by 2020. While no new teams are planned for next season, Atlanta are scheduled to join in 2017, LA will acquire a second team in 2018 when Los Angeles FC kick off as rivals to the Galaxy, and close on their heels come Minnesota-St Paul and Miami.

It is Miami that has made all the headlines – partly because the group seeking the franchise is headed by David Beckham, but mostly because of the trouble that group has had finding a site to build its stadium. It has become a basic demand of MLS that any franchise seeker must either already have a stadium or have a site and advanced plans for building one.

The Beckham group's plans for a waterfront stadium, announced in early 2014, ran into powerful opposition from the highly influential cruise-ship operators, who insisted that the projected stadium would harm their business. Beckham had to back down, but a plan to build at a different waterfront site was also defeated. The possibility of building on the site of the old Orange Bowl (now demolished) looked good until local owners started valuing their land way above the market level.

But MLS clearly wants a Miami franchise and is well aware that Beckham would be a popular and influential owner. So a fourth Beckham try looks like making it. A very different site from the first two, the new one is in the Overtown district, which is variously described as a poor neighbourhood, run-down, even crime-ridden. It is an area ripe for upgrading and gentrification, and a new stadium fits those plans nicely.



Champions...Portland Timbers celebrate their first MLS Cup

Beyond 2020, there are already credible bids for franchises from St Louis, San Antonio, and Sacramento. But if the finding of new cities and ownership groups is no longer a problem for MLS, there is a third factor in the league's growth that still presents problems.

More teams means a demand for more players. Where will they come from? Ideally, they will be Americans. There should be a pipeline of young US players arriving, good enough to claim starting roles on MLS teams, but that is proving a slow process.

The colleges, once seen as a certain source of American talent, have proved to be not up to the task. MLS clubs now run their own academies and – in a new development – are either owning or partnering with a club in the third-tier United Soccer Leagues. In creating competitive playing-time for young players, this is proving much more successful than previous

Early goal... Timbers' Diego Valeri closes down Columbus keeper Steve Clark

Review

attempts to run an MLS reserve-team league.

Even so, there can be little doubt that, if a drop in the quality of MLS play is to be avoided, new clubs will have to rely on foreign imports. For some years, MLS has been relaxing the financial controls on how much a club can spend on player salaries. At the moment, MLS imposes a salary cap of $3.6million on each team. That covers all the players under contract and looks pretty feeble when concerned with top European clubs, where $3.6m would be well below the annual salary of just one top star.

MLS began seeking a way around this in 2007 with the creation of Designated Players who are allowed to earn way above the regular maximum for individual players of $457,000. Each team is allowed to have a maximum of three Designated Players.

Rejected...one of Miami's proposals for a home stadium

Since then, the league has adopted a scheme of granting funds to teams which they can use to pay players above the maximum, but below the millions spent on DPs. The extra salaries will not count against the salary cap. The move is aimed at filling a perceived gap in MLS squads.

"For greater roster depth," says MLS' Todd Durbin, "we need to have more players earning between $450,000 and $1m a year."

For now, it seems likely that most of the money will continue to be spent acquiring experienced foreign players, while up-and-coming Americans are likely to be whisked away by foreign clubs.

And that has now happened to late-developer Jorge Villafana who, at 26 and after two excellent seasons with the Portland Timbers, left the club after their MLS Cup success to join Mexico's Santos Laguna.

Portland coach Caleb Porter has been quoted as saying that the deal was good for Villafana and good for Portland, a win-win situation – although why it is good for the Timbers to lose a very good, popular player, is unclear. WS

BEST OF SEASON

● **PLAYER**
Sebastian Giovinco (Toronto)
Broke the record for most combined goals and assists during his first-ever season in MLS.

● **COACH**
Caleb Porter (Portland)
Led Timbers to their MLS Cup win and saw his side set a new single-season club record in of 15 wins.

● **NEWCOMER**
Cyle Larin (Orlando)
The Canadian scored 17 goals in just 27 games and was a deserved winners of the MLS Rookie of the Year award.

Japan

MIKE PLASTOW

Sanfrecce triumph

Play-off win secures side's third title in four years

Sanfrecce Hiroshima overcame defending champions Gamba Osaka 4-3 on aggregate to win their third J.League title in four years and claim a place at the Club World Cup.

The J.League had promised an exciting end to the season with its revival of the championship play-offs for the first time since 2004 – and Sanfrecce and Gamba both rose to the occasion in two nail-biting encounters.

Gamba took the game to Sanfrecce both times, but the battle was won by Sanfrecce's tight defending and swift counter-attacks. Gamba's fortunes turned in the closing minutes of the first leg in Osaka, when defender Oh Jae-suk was sent off for retaliation with the hosts leading 2-1 at the time. Sanfrecce then struck twice in time added on to take a 3-2 lead into the second leg.

In Hiroshima, Gamba again scored first, but the title was sealed by substitute Takuma Asano's 76th-minute header.

Despite Gamba's fine play-off performances, there was no denying Sanfrecce's right to a title which they effectively won twice over, including their record-breaking, season-long performance in the league. Their 74 points in the regular campaign not only dwarfed their own back-to-back championship tallies of 63 points in 2012 and 62 in 2013 but it was also the biggest haul by any team since the top flight expanded to 18 clubs in 2005.

For coach Hajime Moriyasu, this was his third time in four years as a boss that he had finished top of the league. Hiroshima also scored more and conceded fewer goals than any other club, roaring into the championship play-offs with a 5-0 win over Shonan Bellmare on the final day of the regular league season.

Battle...Hisato Sato (right) of Sanfrecce

Decisive moment...Takuma Asano (left) heads Sanfrecce's equaliser in the second leg

Hiroshima's solidity started with Takuto Hayashi in goal and a firm back line of stalwarts Tsukasa Shiotani, Kazuhiko Chiba and Hiroki Mizumoto, while Toshihiro Aoyama – in his second season as captain – was a huge presence in deep midfield.

Building on that strong base, the whole team was geared towards attacking, with swift, pinpoint through balls, sharp switching between wings, ambitious dribbling and great changes of pace.

Prolific striker Hisato Sato, who is now 33, had to settle in the end for only 12 league goals but Brazilian midfielder Douglas, brought in from Kyoto Sanga, stepped up to score 21 and finished second overall in the league rankings. Asano, the 21-year old play-off hero, found the net eight times when coming off the bench.

Sato's strike against Shonan on the final day brought his all-time J.League tally level with Masashi Nakayama's record 157 top-flight goals. But Kawasaki Frontale's Yoshito Okubo, the J.League's top scorer for a record third year in a row, is hot on their tail with 23 goals this season and 156 overall.

Gamba looked like missing out on the play-offs altogether until leapfrogging FC Tokyo into third place in the last day, while the race in the regular season was played out instead between Sanfrecce and Urawa Reds.

After letting the championship slip through their fingers at the end of last season, Reds stormed back to take this year's First Stage and were unbeaten with 12 wins in 17 games. They were revived, in particular, by the wide running of Takahiro Sekine and Yuki Muto, who was an inspired signing from Vegalta Sendai.

Muto had never really stood out before but he was Reds' joint-top scorer with 13 goals and also broke into the national team. Keeper Shusaku Nishikawa, defender Tomoaki Makino and midfielder Yosuke Kashiwagi all also re-established themselves with Japan.

Reds' unbeaten run ended in July when they suffered a 2-1 loss at home to Sanfrecce. Before that, they had gone 19 games without defeat – two short of Omiya Ardija's 2013 record. That same month, a goal by Sato in a 4-0 win at Vissel Kobe took his tally into double figures for the twelfth season in a row and helped Sanfrecce to their fifth straight win from the start of the Second Stage.

Kashima Antlers were also pushing hard and recorded six straight wins under their new boss, Masatada Ishii. Antlers defeated Gamba 3-0 in

Champions... Sanfrecce lift the J.League trophy

Review

the League Cup Final and finished second behind Sanfrecce in the Second Stage.

Five teams could have contested the play-offs – the two stage winners and top three teams overall – but there were only three because the two stage winners, Reds and Sanfrecce, were also the top two. Gamba, who pipped Reds at the post in 2014, then did it again by winning the play-off semi-final 3-1 in Saitama.

At the foot of the table, Shimizu S-Pulse – one of the J.League's founding members – were relegated for the first time, together with Matsumoto Yamaga and Montedio Yamagata. Of the J.League's 10 original members, Kashima Antlers, Yokohama F-Marinos and Nagoya Grampus are now the only clubs never to have gone down.

Omiya Ardija, Jubilo Iwata and Avispa Fukuoka were promoted, with Jubilo's ex-England striker Jay Bothroyd top scorer in the second tier with 20 goals.

Thanks to the play-offs, the J.League's aggregate annual attendance topped 10 million for the first time ever this season. WS

BEST OF SEASON

● **COACH**
Hajime Moriyasu (Sanfrecce)
There was no question that the former international midfielder was going to pick up his third coach of the year award in only his fourth season in charge after leading Sanfrecce Hiroshima to his third J.League title. He also steered the side to a record fourth straight J.League Fair Play Award.

● **PLAYER**
Yoshito Okubo (Kawasaki Frontale)
At 33, he has hit the best form of his career since moving to Kawasaki Frontale in 2012 and has been the J.League's top scorer for a record three years in a row. Now just one short of the league's top-flight scoring record, shared by Masashi Nakayama and Hisato Sato.

● **NEWCOMER**
Takuma Asano (Sanfrecce)
Came off the bench to turn many games for Hiroshima this season with his astonishing speed and precision in front of goal. It was only fitting that the 21-year-old should be the hero of the championship play-off as well, with many observers already talking about him as a future national team star.

World Service

By Tim Vickery

	HOW THE TITLE WAS WON	FORMAT	CUP
Bolivia LFPB APERTURA	**Sport Boys Warnes** (in stripes) saw closest rivals Bolivar and The Strongest lose and then beat Ciclon 3-0 to seal their first-ever title.	Two separate tournaments are played on a league basis, in a calendar that follows Europe. There is no overall champion	Not played
Chile PRIMERA APERTURA	Universidad Catolica's 1-0 loss at Audax Italiano handed the title to Colo Colo – whose final game, away to Santiago Wanderers, was cancelled after **fan violence**.	Two separate competitions, with the apertura coming in the second half of the year, followed by the clausura in the first half of the following year. Titles are decided on a league basis, with no overall champion.	Universidad beat Colo Colo in the Final on penalties after a 1-1 draw, with goalkeeper Johnny Herrera scoring with his kick and then saving from Martin Rodriguez to give "*la U*" their fifth Chilean Cup.
Colombia PRIMERA A TORNEO FINALIZACION	**Atletico Nacional** deservedly won the title, beating Junior on penalties after the Final ended 2-2 on aggregate.	Two separate championships, the apertura and finalizacion, are played each year. After the league stage, the top eight qualify for the play-offs, which this time took place on a home-and-away knockout basis. There is no overall champion.	Junior won the 13th edition of the cup, beating Santa Fe 2-1 on aggregate in a two-legged Final.
Ecuador SERIE A	It was a third consecutive title for **Emelec**, who built up a 3-1 lead in the first leg of the Final and then hold LDU Quito to a goalless draw in the return.	In a 12-team top flight, two separate championships are played per year, with the winners meeting in a home-and-away Final.	Not played.
Paraguay PRIMERA CLAUSURA	**Olimpia** let slip a five-point lead with two games to go to finish level with Cerro Porteno, but won 2-1 in a play-off to claim a 40th league title.	Two separate competitions, with the apertura and clausura both played on a league basis, home and away with 12 teams. There is no overall champion.	The country has no cup competition,
Peru TORNEO DESCENTRALIZADO CLAUSURA	**Melgar** celebrated their centenary with a second title with a 5-4 aggregate win over Sporting Cristal in the Final.	Three tournaments are played per year, an apertura and clausura preceded by a shorter competition, the Inca tournament. The three winners go into the semi-finals with the team which has accumulated most points over the year.	In a fascinating competition for teams outside the top two flights, Defensor La Bocana of Piura beat Academia Cantolao of Callao 4-3 on aggregate. The winners go into the first division, while the runners-up enter the second division.
Uruguay PRIMERA APERTURA	At the end of a generally poor competition, **Penarol** held on to a single-goal victory on the last day, against Juventud, to finish a point ahead of rivals Nacional.	Two leagues a year, with the apertura in the second half of the year. There is an overall champion and Penarol will now meet the clausura winners for the right to meet the side which accumulated most points over the two campaigns.	Not played.
Venezuela TORNEO DE ADECUACION	The best two sides in the league phase, Zamora of Barinas and La Guaira from the capital, Caracas, fought their way through to the Final. Zamora won the first leg 2-0 and restricted La Guaira to a single goal victory in the return game.	A different model was used from the traditional apertura and clausura in this transitional year. After the league phase, the top eight teams went into a knockout phase, leading to a two-legged Final.	**La Guaira** won 1-0 on aggregate in the Final against Deportivo Lara.

LIBERTADORES QUALIFICATION	PLAYER OF THE SEASON	COACH OF THE SEASON	NEWCOMER OF THE SEASON
The 2014-15 season is used to determine qualification and the representatives are apertura and clausura winners Bolivar, along with The Strongest and Oriente Petrolero, who accumulated the next highest points total over the two campaigns.	Experienced midfielder **Helmuth Gutierrez** was the beating heart of the champions Sport Boys Warnes, supplying leadership and goals.	Argentinian coach Carlos Leeb, whose 10-year career had been limited to smaller clubs, landed his first title, with Sport Boys Warnes. He took a team that struggled to avoid relegation in 2014-15 and moulded them into champions.	Bolivar's 19-year-old **Erwin Saavedra** is a fine striker of the ball and has been fast tracked into the senior international squad.
Colo Colo are joined by 2015 clausura winners **Cobresal** and cup winners Universidad de Chile.	Colo Colo's Jaime Valdes returned to Chile in 2014, after 13 seasons in Europe, and demonstrated the benefit of all his experience. Controls the game from central midfield and was badly missed every time he was ruled out by injury or suspension.	**Ronald Fuentes** has done a sound job at Universidad de Concepcion, winning the 2014-15 Cup at the end of March and steered his side to third place in the league.	A breakthrough campaign for 18-year-old striker Jeisson Vargas of Universidad Catolica, who blossomed alongside the experience of centre-forward Roberto Gutierrez and left-winger Mark Gonzalez.
Atletico Nacional will be joined by apertura winners **Deportivo Cali** (in green) and Santa Fe, who won the Sudamericana Cup.	The goals of Paraguayan centre-forward **Roberto Ovelar** took Junior very close to a domestic double.	Methodical successor to the more flamboyant Juan Carlos Osorio, Reinaldo Rueda built an Atletico Nacional side that combined attacking flair with defensive solidity, conceding just 11 goals in 26 games.	Atletico Nacional teenager **Marlos Moreno** started the season playing out wide but by the end of the year he was popping up more in the penalty area.
Emelec, the overall champions, and LDU. winners of the first stage, are joined by Independiente del Valle, the side who accumulated the next most points over the course of the two campaigns.	Strong, quick and skilful, Emelec striker **Miller Bolanos** is an international regular who looks set for a move abroad.	**Omar De Felippe** took over from Gustavo Quinteros at Emelec and the Argentinian did not mess with a winning formula, turning two consecutive titles into three.	Gabriel Cortez is the latest product from an Independiente del Valle set-up that specialises in grooming young talent. A 20-year-old playmaker with a refined touch.
Olimpia, are joined by **Cerro Porteno**, who won the apertura, and Guarani, who qualified on the basis of points accumulated over the two campaigns.	Jose Leguizamaon of Sportivo Luqueno is a stocky 24-year old whose switch in 2014 from midfield to centre-back has proved a great success. Able to bring the ball out and also offers a threat with his forward breaks and at set-pieces.	Spanish coach **Fernando Jubero** of Guarani surprisingly resigned after almost four years in charge, producing attractive sides and developing young talent.	Olimpia's Saul Salcedo is an 18-year-old centre-back, who is mature beyond his years and is in the Paraguayan tradition of determined and calm defenders.
Melgar and **Sporting Cristal** both qualify, together with Universidad Cesar Vallejo, who beat Real Garcilaso in the contest for third place.	Deportivo Municipal centre-forward **Ivan Bulos** led the line well in a solid campaign from last year's second division champions.	**Juan Reynoso** switched systems regularly with Melgar while retaining defensive solidity and attacking efficiency on the way to a rare title win for a provincial side.	The son of a Brazilian, Sporting Cristal's **Luis Da Silva** formed a fine combination with the tricky Irven Avila.
The criteria used are all from the 2014-15 season, so the country's three representatives are Nacional (champions), Penarol (runners-up) and River Plate (on points accumulated over the apertura and clausura seasons).	Experienced and versatile midfielder **Luis Aguiar** of Penarol is talented and combative, with a good range of passing.	Former international and apertura champion as coach of Nacional in 2009, Eduardo Acevedo is in his second spell in charge of Cerro and kept the little club in contention for the title, which they have never won, until the last day of the season.	In the last 12 months, slightly built attacking midfielder Brian Lozano of Defensor has gone from unknown to member of the senior Uruguay squad. Bright and perky, he dribbles well and shoots with surprising power.
Overall champions Deportivo Tachira, runners-up Trujillanos, and Caracas, by virtue of claiming the most points on aggregate in 2014-15.	Panamanian striker Ricardo Clarke of Zamora troubled defences all season with his pace, strength and athleticism. He formed an effective partnership with the lively, promising Yeferson Soteldo and scored some memorable goals.	Former international defender Leonardo Gonzalez produced a solid body of work in his first coaching job, at La Guaira, building a consistent team that won the cup and came close to the league title.	Zulia's skilful teenage playmaker **Jefferson Savarino** was a key supply line for Manuel Arteaga, the runaway top goalscorer.

NOVEMBER 26 - DECEMBER 14, 2015

Global diary

A comprehensive record of recent events around the world

Thursday November 26

ARGENTINA: Huracan make it to the Sudamericana Cup Final as a 2-2 draw at home to River Plate gives them a 3-2 victory on aggregate.
EUROPA LEAGUE: Athletic Bilbao, Basle, Braga, Krasnodar, Lazio, Liverpool, Schalke, Sparta Prague, Saint-Etienne, Tottenham Hotspur and Villarreal reach the knockout stage of the competition.
FRANCE: The interior ministry bans away fans from all games in France until mid December following the terrorist attacks in Paris.
INDIA: Former France striker Nicolas Anelka says he is unlikely to remain as player-coach of Mumbai City after a 1-1 draw at home to Kerala Blasters means his side's hopes of qualifying for the knockout stage of the Indian Super League are in jeopardy.

Friday November 27

FRANCE: Lyon go down to a third straight defeat, losing 4-2 at home to Montpellier.

Saturday November 28

ENGLAND: Jamie Vardy scores in Leicester City's 1-1 draw with Manchester United to become the first player to find the net in 11 consecutive Premier League games. However, Manchester City move above Leicester at the top of the table on goal difference with a 3-1 win at home to Southampton.
FRANCE: A 4-1 win against Troyes means Paris Saint-Germain are guaranteed to end the year top of Ligue 1.
SPAIN: On his first start in two months, Lionel Messi is on target in Barcelona's 4-0 victory over Real Sociedad.
THAILAND: Buriram United claim their third successive Thai Premier League title with a 3-1 win at Bangkok Glass. They have now been champions five times – twice more than this season's runners-up, Muangthong United.

Sunday November 29

AFC: Al Ahli and UAE striker Ahmed Khalil is named the confederation's player of the year.
ARGENTINA: Racing win away to local rivals Independiente for the first time in 11 years, taking a 2-0 advantage from the first leg of the Libertadores Cup play-off Final.
CHINA: Jiangsu Guoxin-Sainty score in extra time to beat Shanghai Shenhua 1-0 with the only goal of the two-legged Chinese Cup Final.
FRANCE: Caen climb to second place with a 4-1 victory at Bordeaux, while Marseille draw 3-3 with Monaco to make it five league games without a win at home. Toulouse's 16-year-old Alban Lafont keeps a clean sheet in a 2-0 victory over Nice as he becomes Ligue 1's youngest-ever goalkeeper.
ITALY: Juventus move up to fifth with a 3-0 win at Palermo, while Roma stay fourth following a surprise 2-0 defeat at home to Atalanta.
RUSSIA: The Russian government says clubs will be barred from signing Turkish players during the transfer window due to the strained relationship between the countries.
SPAIN: Aritz Aduriz becomes the first Spaniard this century to score 20 goals in a season before December as he nets a hat-trick in Athletic Bilbao's 3-0 win at Rayo Vallecano.
TUNISIA: Ammar Jemal's first-half goal gives hosts Etoile Sahel a 1-0 win over Orlando Pirates of South Africa to take the CAF Confederation Cup 2-1 on aggregate.
UKRAINE: Volyn Lutsk are awarded four penalties, one of which they miss, in a 9-1 victory over Metalurh Zaporizhzhya, who have yet to win this season.
USA: Columbus Crew lose 1-0 away to New York Red Bulls but win 2-1 on aggregate to reach the Final of the MLS Cup, where they will face Portland Timbers, who beat Dallas 5-3 on aggregate in the Western Conference Final.

Monday November 30

FIFA: Lionel Messi, Neymar and Cristiano Ronaldo are named on the three-man shortlist for the Ballon d'Or, with the winner set to be announced on January 11.
GREECE: Panathinaikos are docked three points by the Greek Super League for fan violence prior to the Athens derby with Olympiakos, which was abandoned before kick-off. The visitors are awarded a 3-0 win and Pana must play their next four home

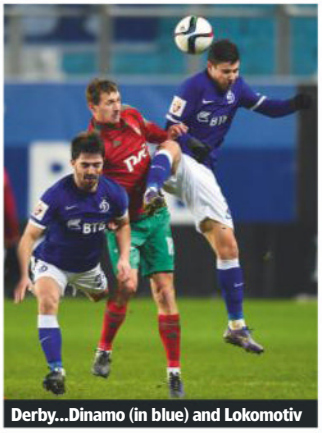
Historic...Jamie Vardy's goal for Leicester City against Manchester United saw him score in a record 11th successive Premier League game

Red glow...Etoile Sahel celebrate winning the CAF Confederation Cup

games behind closed doors.
ITALY: Napoli go top for the first time this season, replacing Internazionale, who they beat 2-1 with two goals from Gonzalo Higuain. Fiorentina, who draw 1-1 at Sassuolo, stay third. Verona sack Andrea Mandorlini with the club bottom of Serie A and without a league win all season.
ROMANIA: Mirel Radoi quits as coach the day after Steaua Bucharest lose 1-0 to league leaders Astra.
RUSSIA: Lokomotiv draw 2-2 with Dynamo in the Moscow derby.
SPAIN: Nuno Espirito Santo resigns as Valencia coach following Sunday's 1-0 defeat by Sevilla.
TURKEY: Fenerbahce take advantage of Besiktas' home defeat to Akhisar on Sunday and beat Trabzonspor 2-0 to leapfrog their Istanbul rivals at the summit.

Tuesday December 1

ENGLAND: Chelsea submit planning permission for a new stadium at Stamford Bridge with an expanded ➤


Derby...Dinamo (in blue) and Lokomotiv

Tajikistan

STEVE MENARY

Bitter-sweet for coach Ergashev

Former Soviet republic struggles on the international stage

Tough going...Istiklol (in red) take on Erbil of Iran in the AFC Cup

Tajikistan may have been eliminated from the 2018 World Cup qualifiers with two matches to go, but a place in the 2019 Asian Cup is still very much within their reach.

Regardless of results in the remaining qualifiers, Mubin Ergashev's side can qualify for the continental finals in the UAE via the play-offs, despite setting out with limited ambitions.

Ergashev took on the job in July 2015, after former Russia striker Mukhsin Mukhamadiev was sacked, and was the obvious replacement following his success in charge of Tajik champions Istiklol.

> "In Istiklol, there are players with greater knowledge and experience, but nothing special"
> Former Tajikistan coach Kemal Alispahic

Before independence in 1991, CSKA Pamir Dushanbe spent three seasons in the Soviet top flight – the only Tajik club to have played at that level – but they have long since been replaced by Istiklol as the dominant local team.

Istiklol were only formed in 2007, but they won the AFC President's Cup in 2012 and recently retained the domestic championship – their fourth league title since 2010.

Istiklol also reached the final of the 2015 AFC Cup. Despite losing to Malaysian club Johor Darul Ta'zim, just getting there was a fillip for the Tajik game, which is struggling to keep pace with neighbouring countries.

Before teaming up with his old boss in the national set-up, Nikola Lazarevic was Ergashev's assistant at Istiklol and he believes the club's domination will help raise standards.

"Tajikistan is not a rich country and the conditions in football are at low level," says the Serb. "But the federation and Istiklol are doing their best to take it higher."

With the president of the Tajikistan Football Federation, Emomali Rustam, controlling the club and his father, Emomali Rahmon, the country's president for two decades, Istiklol's dominance should come as no surprise.

The nation's best-supported club, with the biggest budget, Istiklol's squad is full of national team players, plus imports from Spain, Ukraine and Serbia. To compete, other clubs are forced to look overseas.

The lack of a common language has stopped agents from South East Asia penetrating the country, but their counterparts from Eastern Europe do operate there.

However, clubs without Istiklol's budget are also recruiting from Africa and this is not helping playing standards, according to former national coach Kemal Alispahic, an itinerant Bosnian who managed Tajikistan in 2012 and returned to lead the Olympic team in 2014.

"They are players who cost little and do not have good football knowledge," admits Alispahic. "In Istiklol, there are players with greater knowledge and experience, but nothing special."

For non-Russian speakers, it can be a lonely existence in what UNICEF says is the poorest country in central Eastern Europe.

"Players are full time, though most of them are barely scraping by," says Troy Ready, who first played in the country in 2005.

The former Portland Timbers midfielder was an unlikely import. After playing for an all-star side called Ambassadors in the 2005 Friendship Cup that also featured Tajikistan, the country's Olympic side and Afghanistan, Ready returned in 2009.

He spent four seasons in Kurganteppa playing for Vakhsh and found basic issues. "Facilities are definitely a problem, equipment also is sparse," says the 35-year-old, who now works on the Timbers' coaching staff. "With lack of finances available for coaches and players there are also challenges in terms of the quality of instruction for players."

Alispahic, whose assistant in the national set-up was Ergashev, agrees. "I could see all the problems they were facing," he says. "But they have many talented kids and I believe that, with the improvement of infrastructure, better days for football will come." WS

WHERE IN THE WORLD?

Formerly a member of the Soviet Union, Tajikistan won independence in 1991 but was racked by civil war from 1992 to 1997 and remains the poorest of the old Russian republics
Size: 144,100 sq km
Population: 8.2 million
Capital: Dushanbe
Language: Tajik, Russian
Religion: Sunni Muslim, Shia Muslim

seating capacity of 60,000. Stoke City beat Sheffield Wednesday 2-0 to reach the League Cup semi-finals for the first time since they won the competition in 1972.

ITALY: Luigi Delneri, who has been out of the game since being sacked by Genoa in January 2013, takes charge of Verona. Milan need extra time to overcome Serie B side Crotone in the Italian Cup, eventually winning 3-1.

FRANCE: Paris Saint-Germain's nine-game winning run in Ligue 1 ends with a 0-0 draw away to third-place Angers.

SPAIN: Atletico Madrid come from behind to beat third-tier Reus 2-1 in the first leg of their Spanish Cup tie, while second division Leganes beat Granada 2-1.

Wednesday December 2

BRAZIL: Palmeiras goalkeeper Fernando Prass scores the decisive spot-kick in the Brazilian Cup Final as his side draw 2-2 with Santos on aggregate after trailing 1-0 from the away leg. The second leg at the Allianz Parque is watched by a stadium record of 39,660.

CHILE: Universidad beat Colo Colo on penalties in the Chilean Cup Final to qualify for the Libertadores Cup.

COLOMBIA: Santa Fe draw 0-0 with Huracan in Argentina in the first leg of the Sudamericana Cup Final.

CYPRUS: Christakis Christoforou, who guided AEL Limassol to last season's Cypriot Cup Final and victory in the Cyprus Super Cup before leaving the club in October, is named national coach.

ENGLAND: Liverpool win 6-1 at Southampton and then draw Stoke City in the League Cup semi-finals. Everton face Manchester City in the other two-legged tie.

FRANCE: Saint-Etienne lose 1-0 at Lille, who celebrate a first win in seven attempts on coach Frederic Antonetti's home debut.

ITALY: Third-tier outfit Alessandria beat Serie A side Palermo 3-2 in the fourth round of the Italian Cup.

JAPAN: Sanfrecce Hiroshima win 3-2 away to Gamba Osaka in the first leg of the J.League Play-off Final.

SPAIN: Gary Neville is appointed coach of Valencia, where his brother, Phil, is on the staff. In the Spanish Cup, Real Madrid win 3-1 away to Cadiz but could be expelled from the competition as Denis Cheryshev, who opened the scoring, should have been serving a one-match ban after picking up three yellow cards while on loan at Villarreal last season.

USA: Toronto striker Sebastian Giovinco is named Most Valuable ➤

Champions League

GAVIN HAMILTON

United go out at the group stage

Wolfsburg and PSV go through

Manchester United were the biggest casualties of the Champions League group stage after poor form, confused tactics and a run of injuries left Louis Van Gaal's side needing to win their final game, away at Wolfsburg, to progress to the knockout stage.

On a thrilling night, Wolfsburg came from behind to win 3-2 – a result which, combined with PSV's defeat of CSKA Moscow, sealed United's fate and sent them into the Europa League.

United had begun the group as clear favourites but a poor start, losing away to PSV in their opening game, left them chasing results. A goalless draw in Eindhoven in the penultimate group game meant Van Gaal's side needed to win in Germany.

Injuries forced Van Gaal to give a full debut to Uruguayan defender Guillermo Varelo. Teenage defender Cameron Borthwick-Jackson was given a debut as a substitute, while midfielder Nick Powell made his first United appearance for over a year.

United took an early lead against the run of play through Anthony Martial, but Brazilian defender Naldo equalised before Vierinha finished off a brilliant team move to give the hosts the lead before half-time.

United's hopes were raised when CSKA took the lead over PSV in Eindhoven, and they equalised when Joshua Guilavogui scored an own goal. But just a minute later Naldo headed in from a corner to seal victory for Wolfsburg.

Praise...Danijel Milicevic (centre) scores for Gent against Zenit

Third...Naldo scores for Wolfsburg against United

Manchester United were one of three seeded teams who failed to qualify

Wolfsburg topped the group despite selling Kevin De Bruyne to Manchester City in the summer. His replacement, Julian Draxler, was outstanding against United, playing a key in role in Wolfsburg's second goal.

United were one of three seeded teams from the top half of the group draw who failed to reach the knockout stage. The others were Valencia, who lost their final game at home to Lyon in front of new boss Gary Neville, and Bayer Leverkusen, who were squeezed out of their group on goal difference by Roma.

Valencia sacked Portuguese coach Nuno after defeats left them needing to beat Lyon in their final game, while hoping that Gent lost to group leaders Zenit. But despite having drawn 1-1 with Barcelona in La Liga a few days earlier, Valencia surrendered meekly to Lyon, who had only gained a single point from their previous five matches.

Instead, it was Gent, who ended leader's Zenit hopes of finishing with six wins out of six, who went through at Valencia's expense.

Gent were the surprise success story of the group stages, becoming the first Belgian team to reach the last 16 for 15 years. Hein Vanhaezebrouck's side of unheralded players had the smallest budget of any

side in the group stages. Midfielder Sven Kums and strikers Laurent Depoitre and Danijel Milicevic have earned particular praise and are set to attract offers from wealthier clubs at the end of the season.

Gent's victory over Zenit in the final group match ensured that only two teams came through all six matches unbeaten – Barcelona and Real Madrid.

Real's tally of 16 points was the best in the competition, while they finished as joint top scorers alongside Bayern Munich on 19 goals. Cristiano Ronaldo was the leading individual scorer, on 11.

Bayern, whose performances confirmed them as one of the favourites to reach the Final at Milan's San Siro stadium on May 28, were surprisingly beaten by Arsenal in Munich on matchday four. That victory started Arsenal's recovery from a poor start when they looked dead and buried following defeats to Olympiakos and Dinamo Zagreb.

Roma pipped Leverkusen to second spot in their group behind Barcelona – despite being thrashed by Barcelona. They finished with six points, the lowest points tally of any knockout-stage qualifier in Champions League history.

The round of 16 will feature a number of unfamiliar faces. PSV are through to the knockout stage for the first time in nine years after winning their final game against CSKA Moscow. Dynamo Kiev will be there for the first time in 16 years, although they must play the home leg of their tie against Manchester City behind closed doors as punishment by UEFA for the racist behaviour of their fans in the group game against Chelsea.

Against Dinamo Zagreb and their other European opponents, the English champions re-found the swagger that has been lacking in their Premier League campaign. But they face a tough last-16 match against Paris Saint-Germain, their conquerors at the same stage last season. PSG conceded just one goal in this year's group stages, making them the best defence in the competition. WS

LAST 16 DRAW

FIRST LEGS

Feb 16
PSG v Chelsea
Benfica v Zenit St Petersburg
Feb 17
Gent v Wolfsburg
Roma v Real Madrid
Feb 23
Arsenal v Barcelona
Juventus v Bayern Munich
Feb 24
PSV v Atletico Madrid
Dynamo Kiev v Manchester City

SECOND LEGS

March 8
Wolfsburg v Gent
Real Madrid v Roma
March 9
Chelsea v PSG
Zenit St Petersburg v Benfica
March 15
Atletico Madrid v PSV
Manchester City v Dynamo Kiev
March 16
Barcelona v Arsenal
Bayern Munich v Juventus

Player in his debut MLS season. The Italian also wins the Golden Boot and Newcomer of the Year awards.

Thursday December 3

FIFA: CONCACAF president Alfredo Hawit and CONMEBOL president Juan Angel Napout are arrested in Zurich as part of the ongoing FIFA corruption investigation.
FRANCE: Bottom of the league Troyes part company with coach Jean-Marc Furlan the day after they lose 3-0 to Toulouse, who are one place above them. Marseille move into the top half of the table for the first time this season with a 1-0 win at Rennes.
RUSSIA: Despite a 2-0 loss at Amkar Perm that stretches their winless streak to six games, CSKA Moscow go into the winter break top of the table.

Friday December 4

FRANCE: Zlatan Ibrahimovic scores his 86th and 87th goals to become Paris Saint-Germain's leading Ligue 1 goalscorer of all time as his side beat Nice 3-0.
ITALY: Juventus make it five wins on the trot as they beat Lazio 1-0.

Saturday December 5

CECAFA CUP: Uganda win the Senior Challenge Cup for a record-extending 14th time by beating Rwanda 1-0 in the Final.
ENGLAND: Jamie Vardy fails to score for the first time in 12 Premier League games, but team-mate Riyad Mahrez grabs a hat-trick as Leicester City win 3-0 at Swansea City to top the table. Chelsea lose 1-0 at home to Bournemouth.
FRANCE: Lyon go down 2-0 to Angers in the last Ligue 1 game at the Stade de Gerland before moving into a new 59,000-capacity stadium in January.
GERMANY: Bayern Munich surrender their unbeaten Bundesliga record, going down 3-1 away to Borussia Monchengladbach. Their lead is cut to five points as Borussia Dortmund win 2-1 at Wolfsburg
ITALY: Internazionale go top of Serie A with a 1-0 win over Genoa.
JAPAN: Sanfrecce Hiroshima draw 1-1 with Gamba Osaka to win the J.League 4-3 on aggregate.
SPAIN: New boss Gary Neville watches from the stands as Valencia grab a late equaliser to draw 1-1 at home to Barcelona.

Sunday December 6

ARGENTINA: Despite losing 2-1 at home to Independiente, Racing win 3-2 on aggregate to qualify for the ➤

➤ 2016 Libertadores Cup.
CHILE: Universidad Catolica's 1-0 defeat at Audax Italiano means Colo Colo win the 2015 apertura title.
GERMANY: Stuttgart move off the bottom of the Bundesliga with a 1-1 draw against Werder Bremen. In their first derby with Eintracht Frankfurt since 1982, Darmstadt win 1-0 thanks to Aytac Sulu's header.
ITALY: Napoli miss their chance to return to the top of the table as they lose 3-2 at Bologna – and drop to third as Fiorentina beat Udinese 3-0.
URUGUAY: Penarol beat Juventud 1-0 to win the apertura tournament.
USA: Portland Timbers win the MLS Cup for the first time, beating Columbus Crew 2-1 in the Final.

Monday December 7

ARGENTINA: Lanus beat Gimnasia 3-1 on aggregate to claim their place in next year's Sudamericana Cup.
ENGLAND: Arsenal's Alexis Sanchez becomes the third successive South American to be named Player of the Year by the Football Supporters' Federation, following in the footsteps of Luis Suarez and Sergio Aguero.

Tuesday December 8

ENGLAND: A 4-2 win at home to Borussia Monchengladbach, coupled

Victorious...Penarol celebrate their Uruguayan apertura championship success

France

HOWARD JOHNSON

Forget PSG, minnows are season's big news

Angers and Caen occupy European places

Just before France heads into its traditional winter break, there can't be a single football fan in the country who is surprised by Paris Saint-Germain's inexorable march towards a fourth successive Ligue 1 title. The problem is that nobody – not even the most rabid PSG fan – is even remotely excited by this.

Having opened up a massive 17-point lead over their nearest rivals after 18 games, the capital club have sucked the life out of the domestic league simply by being on a different planet to the rest of the competition: financially, technically and tactically.

Yet while the title is already a done deal, what has been genuinely thrilling in this season's campaign has been the remarkable rise of two of the country's most unfashionable teams.

At the end of last season, Normandy club Caen finished in a lowly 13th place, fully 37 points behind champions PSG. Angers, meanwhile, hailing from the unfashionable Maine et Loire region in the north west of the country, weren't even at the top-flight table yet, having just sneaked out of Ligue 2 by grabbing the third promotion spot, behind champions Troyes and GFC Ajaccio.

Yet while Troyes are firmly rooted to the bottom of Ligue 1 this term, little Angers have been performing miracles. Under 48-year-old coach Stephane Moulin, a former Angers player, their first season back in Ligue 1 in over 20 years has seen them smashing records all over the place and defying expectations to sit in second place just one game shy of the 2015-16 halfway point.

Angers amassed an impressive 31 points, with just three defeats, in their opening 18 matches, but what has been most remarkable is that they had conceded just 10 league goals in that time. When compared to moneybags Monaco, who let in 23 in the same number of games, it's not hard to see why Angers are riding high.

"We haven't stolen a single one of our points," says Moulin. "They've all been earned."

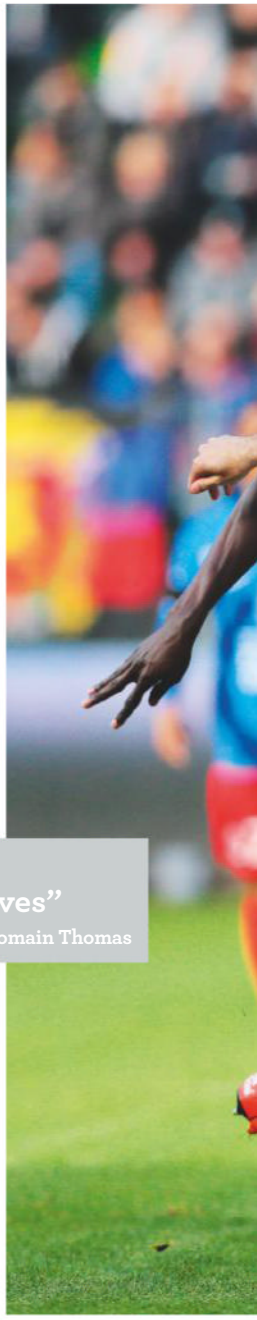
Angers have the smallest budget of any of the 20 Ligue 1 clubs – just €24million, compared to PSG's €490m – and didn't spend a single penny in recruiting 10 players over the summer, preferring to sign those who were out of contract. The best of an impressive bunch has been Senegalese attacking midfielder Cheikh N'Doye, who arrived from Ligue 2 club Creteil and has proved to be one of the stars of the current season.

Not that anyone at Angers will talk of stars. The team's success has been built around defensive rigour, solidarity between team-mates and bags of desire. As defender Romain Thomas explains: "Those of us who've been here a while have made sure everybody knows we're all in the same boat.

> "There are no stars at Angers. It's the team that matters and nobody gets above themselves"
> Angers defender Romain Thomas

"There are no stars at Angers. It's the team that matters and nobody gets above themselves. That's why we've been able to carry on where we left off last season."

Continuity has also played a major part in Angers' rise to the top. Moulin has been at the club since 2005 and in charge of the first team since June of 2011, while sporting director Olivier Pickeu, who is primarily responsible for that incredible recruitment drive, has



with Juventus' 1-0 loss at Sevilla, sees Manchester City top their Champions League group. Manchester United lose 3-2 at Wolfsburg and drop into the Europa League as PSV beat CSKA Moscow 2-1.

EUROPA LEAGUE: Dropping down from the Champions League along with Manchester United are last year's Europa League winners Sevilla, and previous champions Galatasaray and Shakhtar Donetsk.

FRANCE: Having become Paris Saint-Germain's record Lige 1 scorer at the weekend, Zlatan Ibrahimovic beats George Weah's club best of 17 goals in Europe during a 2-0 victory over Shakhtar Donetsk.

Record run...Cristiano Ronaldo hit four goals in Real's Madrid's 8-0 thrashing of Malmo

GREECE: Players are set to go on indefinite strike after the top two leagues fail to reach an agreement with the Hellenic Football Federation over a players' relief fund.

SPAIN: Cristiano Ronaldo scores four times as Real Madrid beat Malmo 8-0 and sets a new record of 11 goals in the Champions League group stage. Atletico Madrid beat Benfica 2-1 to top their group.

Wednesday December 9

BELGIUM: Gent become the first Belgian side to reach the knockout stage of the Champions League ➤

Challenge...Cheikh N'Doye of Angers (in white) battles Caen's Julien Feret

Big day...Angers salute the fans after holding Paris Saint-Germain to a goalless draw

been on board since way back in 2006.

Of course, there's still a long way to go. A number of big games against the likes of PSG, Bordeaux, Lyon and Saint-Etienne loom large on the horizon for Angers and they may well yet suffer a reality check. The talk from the Stade Jean-Bouin remains sensibly measured and is all about gathering enough points to avoid the drop, but somewhere deep down, all those humble servants must be wondering just where this fairy-tale season can end up taking them come May.

Just below Angers in fourth – and with just one point fewer after 18 games – Caen's performance has been only slightly less impressive.

After a disastrous start to last season following promotion in 2014 – put down by many to the major distraction of allegations swirling around of match-fixing – coach Patrice Garande got to grips with the demands of the top flight in the second half of the campaign and gave some hints of the potential of his team.

That potential has been more than fulfilled so far this time out. Among Caen's hugely impressive results to date was a 4-1 spanking of Bordeaux away in November. The team has shown real character, too, shrugging off a 4-0 home defeat by Lyon in August to regroup and drive themselves up the table.

"We're not used to being in this position," says Garande. "But I try to put the least possible pressure on the players and make sure we stay true to our philosophies every time we play. This season we've got a good spirit, we're solid, and that really helps. It's the basis of everything. If you don't have that, you don't have anything."

Like Angers, Caen recruited carefully in the close season, bringing in Lyon keeper Remy Vercoutre and veteran Rennes midfielder Julien Feret, while Lille pair, striker Ronny Rodelin and midfielder Jonathan Delaplace arrived on loan and a permanent deal respectively.

The main attraction so far, however, has been 24-year-old striker Andy Delort, who has bounced back from a miserable time in England with Wigan Athletic to become one of the league's top strikers since joining Caen in the summer.

It's not all been plain sailing for Garande's men and doubtless, like Angers, there will be banana skins ahead. But despite meagre resources both have fought their way into the European qualifying places – and deservedly so.

Wherever these two sides finally end up, French football has been all the richer for their unexpected arrival at the summit of the game. WS

Spain

SID LOWE

All a bit of a joke

The Spanish league's annual awards make little sense

La Liga chose the comedian Leo Harlem to present their gala for the 2014-15 season, but he was out-funnied by the awards themselves, which not for the first time were a bit of a laughing stock. Still, at least people were watching and talking about them, which was what mattered most of all.

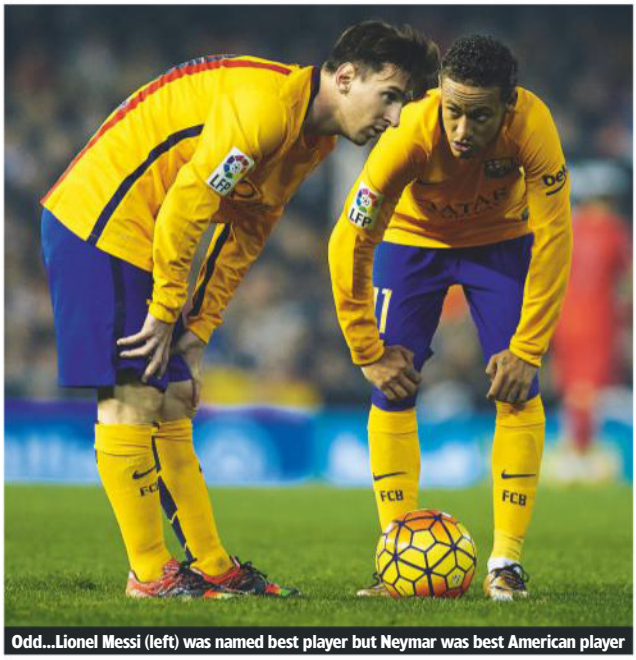
It was said that 134 countries followed the gala live, although a lot of things that are said are not always true – especially when it comes to their reach.

Those who did watch, certainly in Spain, had a lot of fun – just perhaps not for the "right" reasons. And then there were the eternally offended who found the whole thing a terrible affront, but then they find pretty much everything a terrible affront. When it's against them, that is.

La Liga has made a huge effort to gain a greater media presence over the last three or four years and the work it has done is impressive indeed. It takes a while, though, to build a tradition and to make people take you seriously.

The league awards are only three years old and it's hard to avoid the feeling that they are still in that phase where they need the players more than the players need the awards; where what matters most is big names and not upsetting anyone.

Best midfielder... but Real Madrid's James Rodriguez beat a player who isn't a midfielder



Odd...Lionel Messi (left) was named best player but Neymar was best American player

African star... Sofiane Feghouli

But, of course, when you try not to upset anyone, you upset people. And so it is that even though they are working hard at promoting Spain's "other" clubs, the reality is that the big two still dominate.

When Atletico Madrid won the league, they didn't win any of the awards, and when Lionel Messi was voted as the best player two years ago, they hastily constructed another award to try to ensure that there was also something there for Cristiano Ronaldo.

And so to this year. Valencia's Sofiane Feghouli won the award for best African player and Luis Enrique won best coach. So far, so good. But then it all gets a little weird. And not just because, as the angry media mob in Barcelona were complaining, that in a treble year Barca got only five awards while Madrid got three...as if that, in itself, is impossible and a heinous crime.

Claudio Bravo received the award for the league's best goalkeeper – a moment that was marked with a video in which he appeared making mistakes.

Sergio Ramos won the best defender award for the third year in a row. Now, Ramos is very good, of course, a world and European champion, the man who rescued

Clangers...there was a video of mistakes by Claudio Bravo

the *decima* for Madrid. But it may also be because he is famous, likeable and almost certain to turn up, rather than because he was better last term than, say, Gerard Pique or Nicolas Otamendi, which he wasn't.

James Rodriguez won the best midfielder award, ahead of Antoine Griezmann...who is not a midfielder.

And Messi won the best attacker and best player award – but not the best American player award. That went to Neymar, who was deemed a better American player than Messi last term but not a better player than Messi. If that makes sense...

And while Messi won the best player award, Ronaldo won what most joked was the "Quick Let's Think of an Award To Make Sure He Turns Up Award", officially known as the Fans' Award – which he didn't turn up to collect. WS

➤ with a 2-1 victory over Zenit.

COLOMBIA: Santa Fe beat Huracan of Argentina on penalties to win the Sudamericana Cup.

ENGLAND: Arsenal and Chelsea go into the Champions League knockout stage with wins over Olympiakos and Porto respectively. Swansea City sack manager Garry Monk.

PARAGUAY: After finishing the league campaign level on points, Olimpia beat Cerro Porteno 2-1 in the clausura championship play-off.

UKRAINE: Dynamo Kiev win 1-0 at home to Maccabi Tel-Aviv and reach the last 16 of the Champions League for the first time in 16 years.

Thursday December 10

CLUB WORLD CUP: Sanfrecce Hiroshima kick-start the competition with a 2-0 win against Auckland City.

FRANCE: Karim Benzema is banned from international football by the French Football Federation over his involvement in a sex-tape blackmail case involving France team-mate Mathieu Valbuena.

HONDURAS: Olimpia midfielder Arnold Peralta is shot dead in the car park of a shopping centre.

ITALY: Napoli beat Legia Warsaw 5-2 to finish with the only 100 per cent record in the Europa League and break the competition record by scoring 22 goals in the group stage.

Record...Napoli's Lorenzo Insigne celebrates a goal against Legia

MEXICO: Tigres beat Pumas 3-0 in their home leg of the Liga MX apertura liguilla Final.

Friday December 11

ARGENTINA: Former international striker Diego Milito, who was due to retire at the end of the year, says he will now play on for Racing in the 2016 Libertadores Cup.

UEFA: Federation president Michel Platini will be barred from the Euro 2016 draw after losing an appeal against his 90-day suspension.

Saturday December 12

GERMANY: Javier Hernandez scores a hat-trick as Bayer Leverkusen thrash Borussia Monchengladbach 5-0 to inflict a first league defeat in 11 games on coach Andre Schubert.

ITALY: Internazionale stretch their lead over Fiorentina to four points with a 4-0 win at Udinese.

MALAYSIA: Selangor claim their 33rd Malaysia Cup with a 2-0 win over Kedah in the Final.

NIGERIA: Two goals from Etebo Oghenekaro give Nigeria a 2-1 victory over Algeria in the Final of the African Under-23 Championship. The finalists, along with third-place South Africa, qualify for the Olympics in Rio.

SPAIN: At the age of 18 years and 195 days, Adalberto Penaranda breaks Lionel Messi's record as the youngest foreign player to score a brace in La Liga, grabbing both goals as Granada beat Levante 2-1.

Sunday December 13

CLUB WORLD CUP: Guangzhou Evergrande overcome America 2-1 and Sanfrecce Hiroshima beat TP Mazembe 3-0.

ENGLAND: Arsenal win 2-0 at Aston Villa to go top of the table.

FRANCE: Paris Saint-Germain thrash Lyon 5-1 while Marseille are held to a 1-1 draw at home by GFC Ajaccio.

GERMANY: Augsburg shock Schalke 2-1 and Borussia Dortmund win 4-1 against Eintracht Frankfurt.

ITALY: Juventus win for a sixth Serie A game in a row, beating Fiorentina 3-1, as Napoli and Roma draw 0-0.

MEXICO: Leading 3-0 from the first leg, Tigres concede three quick goals in the return and eventually lose 4-1 in extra time, before beating Pumas on penalties in the Liga MX apertura play-off Final.

SPAIN: Real Madrid suffer a third league defeat in five games, going down 1-0 to Villarreal.

Monday December 14

CHAMPIONS LEAGUE: Holders Barcelona are drawn against Arsenal in the last 16, with Chelsea facing Paris Saint-Germain for a third year running and Juventus set to meet Bayern Munich. Manchester City are drawn with Dynamo Kiev, while Real Madrid will face Roma and Atletico Madrid will play PSV Eindhoven.

ENGLAND: Leicester City return to the top of the table with a 2-1 win at home to defending champions Chelsea, who are now just one point above the relegation zone.

HOLLAND: PSV coach Phillip Cocu signs a contract extension with the Eredivisie champions until 2019.

TURKEY: Besiktas beat Istanbul rivals Galatasaray 2-1 to go back above Fenerbahce at the top of the table. WS

ESM XI

EUROPEAN SPORTS MEDIA

NOVEMBER 2015

HOW IT WORKS

Every month, journalists from each member of the European Sports Media group select their first XI based on the best individual performances from Europe's top competitions. For details of how each ESM member voted, visit worldsoccer.com/esm11

SEASON RANKINGS

Cumulative votes through the season

GOALKEEPERS

Keylor NAVAS (Real Madrid)	21 votes
Pepe REINA (Napoli)	4
Claudio BRAVO (Barcelona)	3
Gianluigi BUFFON (Juventus)	2
Samir HANDANOVIC (Internazionale)	2
Manuel NEUER (Bayern Munich)	2
Petr CECH (Arsenal)	1
Gianluigi DONNARUMMA (Milan)	1
Ralf FAHRMANN (Schalke)	1
Joe HART (Manchester City)	1
Fernando MUSLERA (Galatasaray)	1
Hakon OPDAL (Start)	1
Sergio RICO (Sevilla)	1

DEFENDERS

MARCELO (Real Madrid)	15
Diego GODIN (Atletico Madrid)	10
Jerome BOATENG (Bayern Munich)	9
David ALABA (Bayern Munich)	6
Dani ALVES (Barcelona)	6
Matthias GINTER (Borussia Dortmund)	6
Philipp LAHM (Bayern Munich)	6
Nicolas OTAMENDI (Manchester City)	6
Mats HUMMELS (Borussia Dortmund)	5
Jeison MURILLO (Internazionale)	5
Chris SMALLING (Manchester United)	5
Serge AURIER (Paris Saint-Germain)	4
Hector BELLERIN (Arsenal)	4
Alessandro FLORENZI (Roma)	4
Thiago SILVA (Paris Saint-Germain)	4
Raphael VARANE (Real Madrid)	4
Toby ALDERWEIRELD (Tottenham Hotspur)	3
Matteo DARMIAN (Manchester United)	3
Laurent KOSCIELNY (Arsenal)	3
Kalidou KOULIBALY (Napoli)	3
Gerard PIQUE (Barcelona)	3
Sergio RAMOS (Real Madrid)	3
Victor RUIZ (Villarreal)	3
Raul ALBIOL (Napoli)	2
Christian FUCHS (Leicester City)	2
Filipe LUIS (Atletico Madrid)	2
Javi MARTINEZ (Bayern Munich)	2
MAXWELL (Paris Saint-Germain)	2
Jordi ALBA (Barcelona)	1
Davide ASTORI (Fiorentina)	1
Juan BERNAT (Bayern Munich)	1
Alberto BOTIA (Olympiakos)	1
Nathaniel CLYNE (Liverpool)	1
DANILO (Real Madrid)	1
Roderic FILIPPI (GFC Ajaccio)	1
Christophe JALLET (Lyon)	1
Vincent KOMPANY (Manchester City)	1
Julian KORB (Borussia Monchengladbach)	1
Layvin KURZAWA (Paris Saint-Germain)	1
Miguel LAYUN (Porto)	1
Stephan LICHTSTEINER (Juventus)	1
Dejan LOVREN (Liverpool)	1
MAICON (Roma)	1
Adam MASINIA (Bologna)	1
MAURICIO (Lazio)	1
Nacho MONREAL (Arsenal)	1
NALDO (Wolfsburg)	1
Winston REID (West Ham United)	1
Sergi ROBERTO (Barcelona)	1
Gonzalo RODRIGUEZ (Fiorentina)	1
Bacary SAGNA (Manchester City)	1
Alex SANDRO (Juentus)	1
Nelson SEMEDO (Benfica)	1
Martin SKRTEL (Liverpool)	1
Aytac SULU (Darmstadt)	1
Gregory VAN DER WIEL (Paris Saint-Germain)	1
Oscar WENDT (Borussia Monchengladbach)	1
Kurt ZOUMA (Chelsea)	1

MIDFIELDERS

Douglas COSTA (Bayern Munich)	13
Thomas MULLER (Bayern Munich)	12
Kevin DE BRUYNE (Manchester City)	10
Mesut OZIL (Arsenal)	8
Philippe COUTINHO (Liverpool)	6
Angel DI MARIA (Paris Saint-Germain)	6
Andres INIESTA (Barcelona)	5
CASEMIRO (Real Madrid)	4
Sergio BUSQUETS (Barcelona)	3
Hakan CALHANOGLU (Bayer Leverkusen)	3
Riyad MAHREZ (Leicester City)	3
Felipe MELO (Internazionale)	3
Julian WEIGL (Borussia Dortmund)	3
Francis COQUELIN (Arsenal)	2
JORGINHO (Napoli)	2
Gary MEDEL (Internazionale)	2
Henrykh MKHITARYAN (Borussia Dortmund)	2
Mesut OZIL (Arsenal)	2
Dmitri PAYET (West Ham United)	2
Miralem PJANIC (Roma)	2
Ivan RAKITIC (Barcelona)	2
TIAGO (Atletico Madrid)	2
Xabi ALONSO (Bayern Munich)	1
Felipe ANDERSON (Lazio)	1
Andre ANDRE (Porto)	1
Ross BARKLEY (Everton)	1
Karim BELLARABI (Bayer Leverkusen)	1
Santi CAZORLA (Arsenal)	1
Kingsley COMAN (Bayern Munich)	1
Lassana DIARRA (Marseille)	1
Matias FERNANDEZ (Fiorentina)	1
Nicolas GAITAN (Benfica)	1
Fredy GUARIN (Internazionale)	1
Yevhen KONOPLYANKA (Sevilla)	1
Juan MATA (Manchester United)	1
Blaise MATUIDI (Paris Saint-Germain)	1
Paul POGBA (Juventus)	1
Marco REUS (Borussia Dortmund)	1
Bryan RUIZ (Sporting Lisbon)	1
David SILVA (Manchester City)	1
Marc STENDERA (Eintracht Frankfurt)	1
THIAGO Alcantara (Bayern Munich)	1
Yaya TOURE (Manchester City)	1
Borja VALERO (Fiorentina)	1

Arturo VIDAL (Bayern Munich)	1
Daniel WASS (Celta Vigo)	1
Georginio WIJNALDUM (Newcastle United)	1

FORWARDS

NEYMAR (Barcelona)	19
Luis SUAREZ (Barcelona)	18
Robert LEWANDOWSKI (Bayern Munich)	18
Pierre-Emerick AUBAMEYANG (Borussia Dortmund)	16
Jamie VARDY (Leicester City)	15
Anthony MARTIAL (Manchester United)	6
NOLITO (Celta Vigo)	6
Cristiano RONALDO (Real Madrid)	5
Gonzalo HIGUAIN (Napoli)	4
Antoine GRIEZMANN (Atletico Madrid)	3
Lionel MESSI (Barcelona)	3
Karim BENZEMA (Real Madrid)	2
Zlatan IBRAHIMOVIC (Paris Saint-Germain)	2
Hatem BEN ARFA (Nice)	1
Kevin GAMEIRO (Sevilla)	1
Rudy GESTEDE (Aston Villa)	1
Olivier GIROUD (Arsenal)	1
Lorenzo INSIGNE (Napoli)	1
Harry KANE (Tottenham Hotspur)	1
Dirk KUYT (Feyenoord)	1
Alexis SANCHEZ (Arsenal)	1
Alex TEIXEIRA (Shakhtar Donetsk)	1

ESM – EUROPEAN SPORTS MEDIA

The members of ESM are: *A Bola* (Portugal), *Elf* (Holland), *Fanatik* (Turkey), *Frankfurter Allegmeine Zeitung* (Germany), *Goal News* (Greece), *Kicker* (Germany), *Marca* (Spain), *Nemzeti Sport* (Hungary), *So Foot* (France), *Sport* (Belgium), *Sport Express* (Russia), *De Telegraaf* (Holland), *TIPSbladet* (Denmark), *World Soccer* (England). More details of votes at **worldsoccer.com/votes**

Club football

EUROPE

UEFA CHAMPIONS LEAGUE

Group A

Sep15
Paris Saint-Germain (Fra) 2 (Di Maria 4, Cavani 62)
Malmo (Swe) 0
HT: 1-0. **Att:** 46,612. **Ref:** Karasev (Rus)

Sep15
Real Madrid (Spa) 4 (Benzema 30, Cristiano Ronaldo pen 56, pen 64, 82)
Shakhtar Donetsk (Ukr) 0
HT: 1-0. **Att:** 66,389. **Ref:** Bebek (Cro)
Sent off: Stepanenko (Shakhtar) 50

Sep 30
Malmo 0
Real Madrid 2 (Cristiano Ronaldo 29, 90)
HT: 0-1. **Att:** 20,500. **Ref:** Cakir (Tur)
Sent off: Yotun (Malmo) 78

Sep 30
Shakhtar Donetsk 0
Paris Saint-Germain 3 (Aurier 7, David Luiz 23, Srna og 90)
HT: 0-2. **Att:** 32,730. **Ref:** Aytekin (Ger)

Oct 21
Malmo 1 (Rosenberg 17)
Shakhtar Donetsk 0
HT: 1-0. **Att:** 20,500. **Ref:** Sidiropoulos (Gre)

Oct 21
Paris Saint-Germain 0
Real Madrid 0
Att: 46,858. **Ref:** Rizzoli (Ita)

Nov 3
Real Madrid 1 (Nacho 35)
Paris Saint-Germain 0
HT: 1-0. **Att:** 78,300. **Ref:** Clattenburg (Eng)

Nov 3
Shakhtar Donetsk 4 (Hladkyi 29, Srna pen 48, Eduardo 55, Alex Teixeira 73)
Malmo 0
HT: 1-0. **Att:** 23,712. **Ref:** Hategan (Rom)
Sent off: Arnason (Malmo) 89

Nov 25
Malmo 0
Paris Saint-Germain 5 (Rabiot 3, Di Maria 14, 68, Ibrahimovic 50, Lucas Moura 82)
HT: 0-2. **Att:** 20,500. **Ref:** Collum (Sco)

Nov 25
Shakhtar Donetsk 3 (Alex Teixeira pen 77, 88, Dentinho 83)
Real Madrid 4 (Cristiano Ronaldo 18, 70, Modric 50, Carvajal 52)
HT: 0-1. **Att:** 33,990. **Ref:** Nijhuis (Hol)

Dec 8
Paris Saint-Germain 2 (Lucas Moura 57, Ibrahimovic 86)
Shakhtar Donetsk 0
HT: 0-0. **Att:** 44,408. **Ref:** Taylor (Eng)

Dec 8
Real Madrid 8 (Benzema 12, 24, 74, Cristiano Ronaldo 39, 47, 50, 59, Kovacic 70)
Malmo 0
HT: 3-0. **Att:** 60,663. **Ref:** Orsato (Ita)

UEFA CHAMPIONS LEAGUE – GROUP A – FINAL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Real Madrid (Q)	6	5	1	0	19	3	16
PSG (Q)	6	4	1	1	12	1	13
Shakhtar (EL)	6	1	0	5	7	14	3
Malmo	6	1	0	5	1	21	3

Group B

Sep15
PSV Eindhoven (Hol) 2 (Moreno 45+2, Narsingh 57)
Manchester United (Eng) 1 (Depay 41)
HT: 1-1. **Att:** 35,292. **Ref:** Rizzoli (Ita)

Sep15
Wolfsburg (Ger) 1 (Draxler 40)
CSKA Moscow (Rus) 0
HT: 1-0. **Att:** 20,126. **Ref:** Moen (Nor)

Sep 30
CSKA Moscow 3 (Musa 7, Doumbia 21, pen 36)
PSV Eindhoven 2 (Lestienne 60, 68)
HT: 3-0. **Att:** 16,152. **Ref:** Buquet (Fra)
Sent off: Arias (PSV) 80

Sep 30
Manchester United 2 (Mata pen 34, Smalling 53)
Wolfsburg 1 (Caligiuri 4)
HT: 1-1. **Att:** 74,811. **Ref:** Kassai (Hun)

Oct 21
CSKA Moscow 1 (Doumbia 15)
Manchester United 1 (Martial 65)
HT: 1-0. **Att:** 18,456. **Ref:** Velasco Carballo (Spa)

Oct 21
Wolfsburg 2 (Dost 46, Kruse 57)
PSV Eindhoven 0
HT: 0-0. **Att:** 23,375. **Ref:** Undiano Mallenco (Spa)

Nov 3
Manchester United 1 (Rooney 79)
CSKA Moscow 0
HT: 0-0. **Att:** 75,165. **Ref:** Marciniak (Pol)

Nov 3
PSV Eindhoven 2 (Locadia 55, De Jong 86)
Wolfsburg 0
HT: 0-0. **Att:** 35,000. **Ref:** Eriksson (Swe)

Nov 25
CSKA Moscow 0
Wolfsburg 2 (Akinfeev og 67, Schurrle 88)
HT: 0-0. **Att:** 16,450. **Ref:** Rocchi (Ita)

Nov 25
Manchester United 0
PSV Eindhoven 0
Att: 75,321. **Ref:** Kralovec (CzR)

Dec 8
PSV Eindhoven 2 (De Jong 78, Propper 86)
CSKA Moscow 1 (Ignashevich pen 76)
HT: 0-0. **Att:** 34,000. **Ref:** F Borbalan (Spa)

Dec 8
Wolfsburg 3 (Naldo 13, 84, Vieirinha 29)
Manchester United 2 (Martial 10, Guilavogui og 82)
HT: 2-1. **Att:** 26,400. **Ref:** Mazic (Ser)

UEFA CHAMPIONS LEAGUE – GROUP B – FINAL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Wolfsburg (Q)	6	4	0	2	9	6	12
PSV (Q)	6	3	1	2	8	7	10
Man Utd (EL)	6	2	2	2	7	7	8
CSKA Moscow	6	1	1	4	5	9	4

Group C

Sep15
Benfica (Por) 2 (Gaitan 51, Mitroglou 62)
Astana (Kaz) 0
HT: 0-0. **Att:** 32,799. **Ref:** Sidiropoulos (Gre)

Sep15
Galatasaray (Tur) 0
Atletico Madrid (Spa) 2 (Griezmann 18, 25)
HT: 0-2. **Att:** 33,469. **Ref:** Marciniak (Pol)

Sep 30
Astana 2 (Hakan Balta og 77, Canas 89)
Galatasaray 2 (Bilal 31, Eric og 86)
HT: 0-1. **Att:** 27,264. **Ref:** Strombergsson (Swe)

Sep 30
Atletico Madrid 1 (Correa 23)
Benfica 2 (Gaitan 36, Goncalo Guedes 51)
HT: 1-1. **Att:** 40,938. **Ref:** Rocchi (Ita)

Oct 21
Atletico Madrid 4 (Saul 23, Martinez 29, Oliver 63, Dedechko og 89)
Astana 0
HT: 2-0. **Att:** 33,853. **Ref:** Kulbakov (Bls)

Oct 21
Galatasaray 2 (Selcuk pen 19, Podolski 33)
Benfica 1 (Gaitan 2)
HT: 2-1. **Att:** 33,615. **Ref:** Collum (Sco)

Nov 3
Astana 0
Atletico Madrid 0
Att: 29,231. **Ref:** Taylor (Eng)

Nov 3
Benfica 2 (Jonas 52, Luisao 67)
Galatasaray 1 (Podolski 58)
HT: 0-0. **Att:** 35,726. **Ref:** Mazic (Ser)
Sent off: Gaitan (Benfica) 85

Nov 25
Astana 2 (Twumasi 19, Anicic 31)
Benfica 2 (Jimenez 40, 72)
HT: 2-1. **Att:** 15,089. **Ref:** Buquet (Fra)

Nov 25
Atletico Madrid 2 (Griezmann 13, 65)
Galatasaray 0
HT: 1-0. **Att:** 35,753. **Ref:** Rizzoli (Ita)

Dec 8
Benfica 1 (Mitroglou 75)
Atletico Madrid 2 (Saul 33, Vietto 55)
HT: 0-1. **Att:** 47,630. **Ref:** Hategan (Rom)

Dec 8
Galatasaray 1 (Selcuk 64)
Astana 1 (Twumasi 62)
HT: 0-0. **Att:** 26,464. **Ref:** Thomson (Sco)

UEFA CHAMPIONS LEAGUE – GROUP C – FINAL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Atl Madrid (Q)	6	4	1	1	11	3	13
Benfica (Q)	6	3	1	2	10	8	10
Galatasaray (EL)	6	1	2	3	6	10	5
Astana	6	0	4	2	5	11	4

Group D

Sep15
Manchester City (Eng) 1 (Chiellini og 57)
Juventus (Ita) 2 (Mandzukic 70, Morata 81)
HT: 0-0. **Att:** 50,363. **Ref:** Skomina (Sln)

Sep15
Sevilla (Spa) 3 (Gameiro pen 47, Banega pen 66, Konoplyanka 84)
Borussia Monchengladbach (Ger) 0
HT: 0-0. **Att:** 36,959. **Ref:** Kralovec (CzR)

Sep 30
Borussia Monchengladbach 1 (Stindl 54)
Manchester City 2 (Demichelis 65, Aguero pen 90)
HT: 0-0. **Att:** 46,217. **Ref:** Turpin (Fra)

Sep 30
Juventus 2 (Morata 41, Zaza 87)
Sevilla 0
HT: 1-0. **Att:** 36,499. **Ref:** Eriksson (Swe)

Oct 21
Juventus 0
Borussia Monchengladbach 0
Att: 40,940. **Ref:** Thomson (Sco)

Oct 21
Manchester City 2 (Rami og 36, De Bruyne 90+1)
Sevilla 1 (Konoplyanka 30)
HT: 1-1. **Att:** 45,595. **Ref:** Nijhuis (Hol)

Nov 3
Borussia Monchengladbach 1 (Johnson 18)
Juventus 1 (Lichtsteiner 44)
HT: 1-1. **Att:** 46,217. **Ref:** Kuipers (Hol)
Sent off: Hernanes (Juventus) 53

Nov 3
Sevilla 1 (Tremoulinas 25)
Manchester City 3 (Sterling 8, Fernandinho 11, Bony 36)
HT: 1-3. **Att:** 39,261. **Ref:** Moen (Nor)

Nov 25
Borussia Monchengladbach 4 (Stindl 29, 83, Johnson 68, Raffael 78)
Sevilla 2 (Vitolo 82, Banega pen 90+1)
HT: 1-0. **Att:** 45,177. **Ref:** Skomina (Sln)

Nov 25
Juventus 1 (Mandzukic 18)
Manchester City 0
HT: 1-0. **Att:** 38,193. **Ref:** Brych (Ger)

Dec 8
Manchester City 4 (Silva 16, Sterling 80, 81, Bony 85)
Borussia Monchengladbach 2 (Korb 19, Raffael 42)
HT: 1-2. **Att:** 41,829. **Ref:** Makkelie (Hol)

Dec 8
Sevilla 1 (Llorente 65)
Juventus 0
HT: 0-0. **Att:** 35,583. **Ref:** Marciniak (Pol)

UEFA CHAMPIONS LEAGUE – GROUP D – FINAL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Man City (Q)	6	4	0	2	12	8	12
Juventus (Q)	6	3	2	1	6	3	11
Sevilla (EL)	6	2	0	4	8	11	6
M'gladbach	6	1	2	3	8	12	5

Group E

Sep16
Bayer Leverkusen (Ger) 4 (Mehmedi 4, Calhanoglu 47, pen 76, Hernandez 59)
BATE Borisov (Bls) 1 (Milunovic 13)
HT: 1-1. **Att:** 24,280. **Ref:** Makkelie (Hol)

Sep16
Roma (Ita) 1 (Florenzi 31)
Barcelona (Spa) 1 (Suarez 21)
HT: 1-1. **Att:** 57,836. **Ref:** Kuipers (Hol)

Sep 29
Barcelona 2 (Sergi Roberto 80, Suarez 82)
Bayer Leverkusen 1 (Papadopoulos 22)
HT: 0-1. **Att:** 68,694. **Ref:** Atkinson (Eng)

Sep 29
BATE Borisov 3 (Stasevich 8, Mladenovic 12, 30)
Roma 2 (Gervinho 66, Torosidis 82)
HT: 3-0. **Att:** 12,767. **Ref:** Clattenburg (Eng)

Oct 20
BATE Borisov 0
Barcelona 2 (Rakitic 48, 64)
HT: 0-0. **Att:** 13,074. **Ref:** Sousa (Por)

Oct 20
Bayer Leverkusen 4 (Hernandez pen 4, 19, Kampl 84, Mehmedi 86)
Roma 4 (De Rossi 29, 38, Pjanic 54, Iago Falque 73)
HT: 2-2. **Att:** 29,412. **Ref:** Kassai (Hun)

Nov 4
Barcelona 3 (Neymar pen 30, 83, Suarez 60)
BATE Borisov 0
HT: 1-0. **Att:** 68,502. **Ref:** Vad (Hun)

Nov 4
Roma 3 (Salah 2, Dzeko 29, Pjanic pen 81)
Bayer Leverkusen 2 (Mehmedi 46, Hernandez 51)
HT: 2-0. **Att:** 38,361. **Ref:** Karasev (Rus)
Sent off: Toprak (Leverkusen) 79

Nov 24
Barcelona 6 (Suarez 15, 44, Messi 18, 60, Pique 56, Adriano 77)
Roma 1 (Dzeko 90+1)
HT: 3-0. **Att:** 71,433. **Ref:** Cakir (Tur)

Nov 24
BATE Borisov 1 (Gordeichuk 2)
Bayer Leverkusen 1 (Mehmedi 68)
HT: 1-0. **Att:** 12,601. **Ref:** Turpin (Fra)

Dec 9
Bayer Leverkusen 1 (Hernandez 24)
Barcelona 1 (Messi 20)
HT: 1-1. **Att:** 29,412. **Ref:** Clattenburg (Eng)

Dec 9
Roma 0
BATE Borisov 0
Att: 29,489. **Ref:** Atkinson (Eng)

UEFA CHAMPIONS LEAGUE – GROUP E – FINAL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Barcelona (Q)	6	4	2	0	15	4	14
Roma (Q)	6	1	3	2	11	16	6
Leverkusen (EL)	6	1	3	2	13	12	6
BATE Borisov	6	1	2	3	5	12	5

Group F

Sep16
Dinamo Zagreb (Cro) 2 (Oxlade-Chamberlain og 24, Fernandes 58)
Arsenal (Eng) 1 (Walcott 79)
HT: 1-0. **Att:** 17,840. **Ref:** Hategan (Rom)
Sent off: Giroud (Arsenal) 40

Sep16
Olympiakos (Gre) 0
Bayern Munich (Ger) 3 (Muller 52, pen 90+2, Gotze 89)
HT: 0-0. **Att:** 31,688. **Ref:** Velasco Carballo (Spa)

Sep 29
Arsenal 2 (Walcott 35, Sanchez 65)
Olympiakos 3 (Pardo 33, Ospina og 40, Finnbogason 66)
HT: 1-2. **Att:** 59,428. **Ref:** Nijhuis (Hol)

Sep 29
Bayern Munich 5 (Douglas Costa 13, Lewandowski 22, 28, 55, Gotze 25)
Dinamo Zagreb 0
HT: 4-0. **Att:** 70,000. **Ref:** Kulbakov (Bls)

Oct 20
Arsenal 2 (Giroud 77, Ozil 90+4)
Bayern Munich 0
HT: 0-0. **Att:** 59,824. **Ref:** Cakir (Tur)

Oct 20
Dinamo Zagreb 0
Olympiakos 1 (Ideye 79)
HT: 0-0. **Att:** 13,678. **Ref:** Tagliavento (Ita)

Nov 4
Bayern Munich 5 (Lewandowski 10, Muller 29, 89, Alaba 44, Robben 55)
Arsenal 1 (Giroud 69)
HT: 3-0. **Att:** 70,000. **Ref:** Rocchi (Ita)

Nov 4
Olympiakos 2 (Pardo 65, 90)
Dinamo Zagreb 1 (Hodzic 21)
HT: 0-1. **Att:** 31,473. **Ref:** Mateu Lahoz (Spa)
Sent off: Pivaric (Dinamo Zagreb) 79

Nov 24
Arsenal 3 (Ozil 29, Sanchez 33, 69)
Dinamo Zagreb 0
HT: 2-0. **Att:** 58,978. **Ref:** Kassai (Hun)

Nov 24
Bayern Munich 4 (Douglas Costa 8, Lewandowski 16, Muller 20, Coman 69)
Olympiakos 0
HT: 3-0. **Att:** 70,000. **Ref:** Eriksson (Swe)
Sent off: Badstuber (Bayern) 52

Dec 9
Dinamo Zagreb 0
Bayern Munich 2 (Lewandowski 61, 64)
HT: 0-0. **Att:** 19,681. **Ref:** Strombergsson (Swe)

Dec 9
Olympiakos 0
Arsenal 3 (Giroud 29, 49, pen 67)
HT: 0-1. **Att:** 31,388. **Ref:** Rizzoli (Ita)

UEFA CHAMPIONS LEAGUE – GROUP F – FINAL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Bayern (Q)	6	5	0	1	19	3	15
Arsenal (Q)	6	3	0	3	12	10	9
Olympiakos (EL)	6	3	0	3	6	13	9
Dinamo Zagreb	6	1	0	5	3	14	3

Group G

Sep16
Chelsea (Eng) 4 (Willian 15, Oscar pen 45+4, Diego Costa 58, Fabregas 79)
Maccabi Tel Aviv (Isr) 0
HT: 2-0. **Att:** 40,684. **Ref:** Zwayer (Ger)

Sep16
Dynamo Kiev (Ukr) 2 (Husiev 20, Buyalskyi 89)
Porto (Por) 2 (Aboubakar 23, 82)
HT: 1-1. **Att:** 52,369. **Ref:** Brych (Ger)

Sep 29
Maccabi Tel Aviv 0
Dynamo Kiev 2 (Yarmolenko 4, Junior Moraes 50)
HT: 0-1. **Att:** 27,100. **Ref:** Fernandez Borbalan (Spa)

Sep 29
Porto 2 (Andre Andre 39, Maicon 52)
Chelsea 1 (Willian 45+2)
HT: 1-1. **Att:** 46,120. **Ref:** Mateu Lahoz (Spa)

Oct 20
Dynamo Kiev 0
Chelsea 0
Att: 60,291. **Ref:** Skomina (Sln)

Oct 20
Porto 2 (Aboubakar 37, Brahimi 41)
Maccabi Tel Aviv 0
HT: 2-0. **Att:** 35,209. **Ref:** Turpin (Fra)

Nov 4
Chelsea 2 (Dragovic og 34, Willian 83)
Dynamo Kiev 1 (Dragovic 78)
HT: 1-0. **Att:** 41,241. **Ref:** Kralovec (CzR)

Nov 4
Maccabi Tel Aviv 1 (Zahavi pen 75)
Porto 3 (Tello 19, Andre Andre 49, Layun 72)
HT: 0-1. **Att:** 26,646. **Ref:** Sidiropoulos (Gre)

Nov 24
Maccabi Tel Aviv 0
Chelsea 4 (Cahill 20, Willian 73, Oscar 77, Zouma 90+1)
HT: 0-1. **Att:** 29,121. **Ref:** Undiano Mallenco (Spa)
Sent off: Tal Ben Haim/D (Maccabi Tel Aviv) 41

Nov 24
Porto 0
Dynamo Kiev 2 (Yarmolenko pen 35, Gonzalez 64)
HT: 0-1. **Att:** 31,220. **Ref:** Velasco Carballo (Spa)

Dec 9
Chelsea 2 (Marcano og 12, Willian 52)
Porto 0
HT: 1-0. **Att:** 41,096. **Ref:** Cakir (Tur)

Dec 9
Dynamo Kiev 1 (Harmash 16)
Maccabi Tel Aviv 0
HT: 1-0. *Played behind closed doors.*
Ref: Kuipers (Hol)

UEFA CHAMPIONS LEAGUE – GROUP G – FINAL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Chelsea (Q)	6	4	1	1	13	3	13
Dy'mo Kiev (Q)	6	3	2	1	8	4	11
Porto (EL)	6	3	1	2	9	8	10
Mac Tel Aviv	6	0	0	6	1	16	0

Group H

Sep16
Gent (Blg) 1 (Milicevic 68)
Lyon (Fra) 1 (Jallet 58)
HT: 0-0. **Att:** 19,601. **Ref:** Collum (Sco)
Sent off: Dejaegere 41, Foket 87 (both Gent)

Sep16
Valencia (Spa) 2 (Joao Cancelo 55, Andre Gomes 73)
Zenit St Petersburg (Rus) 3 (Hulk 9, 45, Witsel 76)
HT: 0-2. **Att:** 28,005. **Ref:** Thomson (Sco)

Sep 29
Lyon 0
Valencia 1 (Feghouli 42)
HT: 0-1. **Att:** 33,534. **Ref:** Mazic (Ser)

Sep 29
Zenit St Petersburg 2 (Dzyuba 35, Shatov 67)
Gent 1 (Matton 56)
HT: 1-0. **Att:** 18,095. **Ref:** Jug (Sln)

Oct 20
Valencia 2 (Feghouli 15, Mitrovic og 72)
Gent 1 (Foket 40)
HT: 1-1. **Att:** 38,207. **Ref:** Zwayer (Ger)

Oct 20
Zenit St Petersburg 3 (Dzyuba 3, Hulk 56, Danny 82)
Lyon 1 (Lacazette 49)
HT: 1-0. **Att:** 17,517. **Ref:** Atkinson (Eng)

Nov 4
Gent 1 (Kums pen 49)
Valencia 0
HT: 0-0. **Att:** 19,452. **Ref:** Orsato (Ita)

Nov 4
Lyon 0
Zenit St Petersburg 2 (Dzyuba 25, 57)
HT: 0-1. **Att:** 30,173. **Ref:** Brych (Ger)
Sent off: Gonalons (Lyon) 72; Anyukov (Zenit) 88

Nov 24
Lyon 1 (Ferri 7)
Gent 2 (Milicevic 32, Coulibaly 90+5)
HT: 1-1. **Att:** 30,206. **Ref:** Karasev (Rus)

Nov 24
Zenit St Petersburg 2 (Shatov 15, Dzyuba 74)
Valencia 0
HT: 1-0. **Att:** 17,002. **Ref:** Moen (Nor)
Sent off: Ruben Vezo (Valencia) 80

Dec 9
Gent 2 (Depoitre 18, Milicevic 78)
Zenit St Petersburg 1 (Dzyuba 65)
HT: 1-0. **Att:** 19,978. **Ref:** Sousa (Por)

Dec 9
Valencia 0
Lyon 2 (Cornet 37, Lacazette 76)
HT: 0-1. **Att:** 32,494. **Ref:** Jug (Sln)

UEFA CHAMPIONS LEAGUE – GROUP H – FINAL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Zenit (Q)	6	5	0	1	13	6	15
Gent (Q)	6	3	1	2	8	7	10
Valencia (EL)	6	2	0	4	5	9	6
Lyon	6	1	1	4	5	9	4

● *The top 2 in each group have qualified for the 1st knockout round (last16) – see page 82 for the draw; the 3rd-placed teams enter the Europa League at the1st knockout round stage*

EUROPA LEAGUE

Group A

Sep 17: Ajax (Hol) 2 Celtic (Sco) 2; Fenerbahce (Tur) 1 Molde (Nor) 3.
Oct 1: Celtic 2 Fenerbahce 2; Molde 1 Ajax 1.
Oct 22: Fenerbahce 1 Ajax 0; Molde 3 Celtic 1.
Nov 5: Ajax 0 Fenerbahce 0; Celtic 1 Molde 2.
Nov 26: Celtic 1 Ajax 2; Molde 0 Fenerbahce 2.
Dec 10: Ajax 1 Molde 1; Fenerbahce 1 Celtic 1.

EUROPA LEAGUE – GROUP A – FINAL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Molde (Q)	6	3	2	1	10	7	11
Fenerbahce (Q)	6	2	3	1	7	6	9
Ajax	6	1	4	1	6	6	7
Celtic	6	0	3	3	8	12	3

Group B

Sep 17: Bordeaux (Fra) 1 Liverpool (Eng) 1; Sion (Swi) 2 Rubin Kazan (Rus) 1.
Oct 1: Liverpool 1 Sion 1; Rubin Kazan 0 Bordeaux 0.
Oct 22: Bordeaux 0 Sion 1; Liverpool 1 Rubin Kazan 1.
Nov 5: Rubin Kazan 0 Liverpool 1; Sion 1 Bordeaux 1.
Nov 26: Liverpool 2 Bordeaux 1; Rubin Kazan 2 Sion 0.
Dec 10: Bordeaux 2 Rubin Kazan 2; Sion 0 Liverpool 0.

EUROPA LEAGUE – GROUP B – FINAL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Liverpool (Q)	6	2	4	0	6	4	10
Sion (Q)	6	2	3	1	5	5	9
Rubin Kazan	6	1	3	2	6	6	6
Bordeaux	6	0	4	2	5	7	4

Group C

Sep 17: Borussia Dortmund (Ger) 2 Krasnodar (Rus) 1; Qabala (Aze) 0 PAOK Salonika (Gre) 0.
Oct 1: Krasnodar 2 Qabala 1; PAOK Salonika 1 Borussia Dortmund 1.
Oct 22: PAOK Salonika 0 Krasnodar 0; Qabala 1 Borussia Dortmund 3.
Nov 5: Borussia Dortmund 4 Qabala 0; Krasnodar 2 PAOK Salonika 1.
Nov 26: Krasnodar 1 Borussia Dortmund 0; PAOK Salonika 0 Qabala 0.
Dec 10: Borussia Dortmund 0 PAOK Salonika 1; Qabala 0 Krasnodar 3.

EUROPA LEAGUE – GROUP C – FINAL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Krasnodar (Q)	6	4	1	1	9	4	13
Dortmund (Q)	6	3	1	2	10	5	10
PAOK Salonika	6	1	4	1	3	3	7
Qabala	6	0	2	4	2	12	2

Group D

Sep 17: Midtjylland (Den) 1 Legia Warsaw (Pol) 0; Napoli (Ita) 5 Club Brugge (Blg) 0.
Oct 1: Club Brugge 1 Midtjylland 3; Legia Warsaw 0 Napoli 2.
Oct 22: Legia Warsaw 1 Club Brugge 1; Midtjylland 1 Napoli 4.
Nov 5: Club Brugge 1 Legia Warsaw 0; Napoli 5 Midtjylland 0.
Nov 26: Club Brugge 0 Napoli 1; Legia Warsaw 1 Midtjylland 0.
Dec 10: Midtjylland 1 Club Brugge 1; Napoli 5 Legia Warsaw 2.

EUROPA LEAGUE – GROUP D – FINAL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Napoli (Q)	6	6	0	0	22	3	18
Midtjylland (Q)	6	2	1	3	6	12	7
Club Brugge	6	1	2	3	4	11	5
Legia Warsaw	6	1	1	4	4	10	4

Group E

Sep 17: Rapid Vienna (Aut) 2 Villarreal (Spa) 1; Viktoria Plzen (CzR) 2 Dinamo Minsk (Bls) 0.
Oct 1: Dinamo Minsk 0 Rapid Vienna 1; Villarreal 1 Viktoria Plzen 0.
Oct 22: Rapid Vienna 3 Viktoria Plzen 2; Villarreal 4 Dinamo Minsk 0.
Nov 5: Dinamo Minsk 1 Villarreal 2; Viktoria Plzen 1 Rapid Vienna 2.
Nov 26: Dinamo Minsk 1 Viktoria Plzen 0; Villarreal 1 Rapid Vienna 0.
Dec 10: Rapid Vienna 2 Dinamo Minsk 1; Viktoria Plzen 3 Villarreal 3.

EUROPA LEAGUE – GROUP E – FINAL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Rapid V'na (Q)	6	5	0	1	10	6	15
Villarreal (Q)	6	4	1	1	12	6	13
Viktoria Plzen	6	1	1	4	8	10	4
Dinamo Minsk	6	1	0	5	3	11	3

Group F

Sep 17: Groningen (Hol) 0 Marseille (Fra) 3; Slovan Liberec (CzR) 0 Sporting Braga (Por) 1.
Oct 1: Marseille 0 Slovan Liberec 1; Sporting Braga 1 Groningen 0.
Oct 22: Slovan Liberec 1 Groningen 1; Sporting Braga 3 Marseille 2.
Nov 5: Groningen 0 Slovan Liberec 1; Marseille 1 Sporting Braga 0.
Nov 26: Marseille 2 Groningen 1; Sporting Braga 2 Slovan Liberec 1.
Dec 10: Groningen 0 Sporting Braga 0; Slovan Liberec 2 Marseille 4.

EUROPA LEAGUE – GROUP F – FINAL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Sp Braga (Q)	6	4	1	1	7	4	13
Marseille (Q)	6	4	0	2	12	7	12
Slovan Liberec	6	2	1	3	6	8	7
Groningen	6	0	2	4	2	8	2

Group G

Sep 17: Dnipro (Ukr) 1 Lazio (Ita) 1; Saint-Etienne (Fra) 2 Rosenborg (Nor) 2.
Oct 1: Lazio 3 Saint-Etienne 2; Rosenborg 0 Dnipro 1.
Oct 22: Dnipro 0 Saint-Etienne 1; Lazio 3 Rosenborg 1.
Nov 5: Rosenborg 0 Lazio 2; Saint-Etienne 3 Dnipro 0.
Nov 26: Lazio 3 Dnipro 1; Rosenborg 1 Saint-Etienne 1.
Dec 10: Dnipro 3 Rosenborg 0; Saint-Etienne 1 Lazio 1.

EUROPA LEAGUE – GROUP G – FINAL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Lazio (Q)	6	4	2	0	13	6	14
St-Etienne (Q)	6	2	3	1	10	7	9
Dnipro	6	2	1	3	6	8	7
Rosenborg	6	0	2	4	4	12	2

Group H

Sep 17: Skenderbeu (Alb) 0 Besiktas (Tur) 1; Sporting Lisbon (Por) 1 Lokomotiv Moscow (Rus) 3.
Oct 1: Besiktas 1 Sporting Lisbon 1; Lokomotiv Moscow 2 Skenderbeu 0.
Oct 22: Lokomotiv Moscow 1 Besiktas 1; Sporting Lisbon 5 Skenderbeu 1.
Nov 5: Besiktas 1 Lokomotiv Moscow 1; Skenderbeu 3 Sporting Lisbon 0.
Nov 26: Besiktas 2 Skenderbeu 0; Lokomotiv Moscow 2 Sporting Lisbon 4.
Dec 10: Skenderbeu 0 Lokomotiv Moscow 3; Sporting Lisbon 3 Besiktas 1.

EUROPA LEAGUE – GROUP H – FINAL	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Loko'tiv M (Q)	6	3	2	1	12	7	11
Sporting L (Q)	6	3	1	2	14	11	10
Besiktas	6	2	3	1	7	6	9
Skenderbeu	6	1	0	5	4	13	3

Group I

Sep 17: Fiorentina (Ita) 1 Basle (Swi) 2; Lech Poznan (Pol) 0 Belenenses (Por) 0.
Oct 1: Basle 2 Lech Poznan 0; Belenenses 0 Fiorentina 4.
Oct 22: Basle 1 Belenenses 2; Fiorentina 1 Lech Poznan 2.
Nov 5: Belenenses 0 Basle 2; Lech Poznan 0 Fiorentina 2.
Nov 26: Basle 2 Fiorentina 2; Belenenses 0 Lech Poznan 0.
Dec 10: Fiorentina 1 Belenenses 0; Lech Poznan 0 Basle 1.

EUROPA LEAGUE – GROUP I – FINAL	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Basle (Q)	6	4	1	1	10	5	13
Fiorentina (Q)	6	3	1	2	11	6	10
Lech Poznan	6	1	2	3	2	6	5
Belenenses	6	1	2	3	2	8	5

Group J

Sep 17: Anderlecht (Blg) 1 Monaco (Fra) 1; Tottenham Hotspur (Eng) 3 Qarabag (Aze) 1.
Oct 1: Monaco 1 Tottenham Hotspur 1; Qarabag 1 Anderlecht 0.
Oct 22: Anderlecht 2 Tottenham Hotspur 1; Monaco 1 Qarabag 0.
Nov 5: Qarabag 1 Monaco 1; Tottenham Hotspur 2 Anderlecht 1.
Nov 26: Monaco 0 Anderlecht 2; Qarabag 0 Tottenham Hotspur 1.
Dec 10: Anderlecht 2 Qarabag 1; Tottenham Hotspur 4 Monaco 1.

EUROPA LEAGUE – GROUP J – FINAL	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Tottenham (Q)	6	4	1	1	12	6	13
Anderlecht (Q)	6	3	1	2	8	6	10
Monaco	6	1	3	2	5	9	6
Qarabag	6	1	1	4	4	8	4

Group K

Sep 17: APOEL Nicosia (Cyp) 0 Schalke (Ger) 3; Asteras (Gre) 1 Sparta Prague (CzR) 1.
Oct 1: Schalke 4 Asteras 0; Sparta Prague 2 APOEL Nicosia 0.
Oct 22: APOEL Nicosia 2 Asteras 1; Schalke 2 Sparta Prague 2.
Nov 5: Asteras 2 APOEL Nicosia 0; Sparta Prague 1 Schalke 1.
Nov 26: Schalke 1 APOEL Nicosia 0; Sparta Prague 1 Asteras 0.
Dec 10: APOEL Nicosia 1 Sparta Prague 3; Asteras 0 Schalke 4.

EUROPA LEAGUE – GROUP K – FINAL	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Schalke (Q)	6	4	2	0	15	3	14
Sparta P (Q)	6	3	3	0	10	5	12
Asteras	6	1	1	4	4	12	4
APOEL	6	1	0	5	3	12	3

Group L

Sep 17: Athletic Bilbao (Spa) 3 Augsburg (Ger) 1; Partizan Belgrade (Ser) 3 AZ Alkmaar (Hol) 2.
Oct 1: Augsburg 1 Partizan Belgrade 3; AZ Alkmaar 2 Athletic Bilbao 1.
Oct 22: AZ Alkmaar 0 Augsburg 1; Partizan Belgrade 0 Athletic Bilbao 2.
Nov 5: Athletic Bilbao 5 Partizan Belgrade 1; Augsburg 4 AZ Alkmaar 1.
Nov 26: Augsburg 2 Athletic Bilbao 3; AZ Alkmaar 1 Partizan Belgrade 2.
Dec 10: Athletic Bilbao 2 AZ Alkmaar 2; Partizan Belgrade 1 Augsburg 3.

EUROPA LEAGUE – GROUP L – FINAL	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Ath Bilbao (Q)	6	4	1	1	16	8	13
Augsburg (Q)	6	3	0	3	12	11	9
Partizan	6	3	0	3	10	14	9
AZ Alkmaar	6	1	1	4	8	13	4

● *The top 2 in each group have qualified for the 1st knockout round (last 32), along with the 8 3rd-placed teams from the Champions League group stage*

1st knockout round draw

Anderlecht v Olympiakos
Augsburg v Liverpool
Borussia Dortmund v Porto
Fenerbahce v Lokomotiv Moscow[1]
Fiorentina v Tottenham Hotspur
Galatasaray v Lazio
Marseille v Athletic Bilbao
Midtjylland v Manchester United
Saint-Etienne v Basle
Sevilla v Molde
Shakhtar Donetsk v Schalke
Sion v Sporting Braga[2]
Sparta Prague v Krasnodar
Sporting Lisbon v Bayer Leverkusen
Valencia v Rapid Vienna
Villarreal v Napoli
1st legs - Feb18 ([1]Feb16); 2nd legs - Feb 25 ([2]Feb 24)

LITHUANIA

2015 – FINAL	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Zalgiris (C)	36	31	1	4	104	25	94
Trakai	36	27	3	6	92	33	84
Atlantas	36	21	7	8	65	34	70
Suduva	36	21	4	11	76	34	67
Spyris	36	13	6	17	47	74	45
Utenis	36	11	9	16	41	50	42
Stumbras	36	11	8	17	51	74	41
Granitas (R)[1]	36	6	9	21	37	83	27
Siauliai	36	5	5	26	37	94	20
Kruoja (R)	36	4	8	24	23	72	20

[1]Expelled from league because of alleged involvement in match-fixing

SOUTH AMERICA

SUDAMERICANA CUP

Semi-finals

1st legs

Nov 4
Sportivo Luqueno (Par) 1 (Di Vanni 14)
Santa Fe (Col) 1 (Perlaza 61)
HT: 1-0. **Ref:** Ubriaco (Uru)

Nov 5
River Plate (Arg) 0
Huracan (Arg) 1 (Espinoza 15)
HT: 0-1. **Ref:** Cunha (Uru)

2nd legs

Nov 25
Santa Fe 0
Sportivo Luqueno 0
Ref: Osses (Chl)
Agg1-1; Santa Fe on away goals

Nov 26
Huracan 2 (Toranzo 3, Abila 26)
River Plate 2 (Mora 69, 82)
HT: 2-0. **Ref:** Ricci (Bra)
Sent off: Sanchez (River Plate) 90+1
Huracan 3-2 on agg

Final

1st leg

Dec 2
Huracan 0
Santa Fe 0
Ref: Arias (Par)
Huracan: Diaz - San Roman, Nervo, Mancinelli, Balbi, Bogado, Vismara, Espinoza (Miralles 62), Montenegro (Distefano 82), Toranzo, Abila.
Santa Fe: Zapata - Soto, Mina, Meza, Balanta, Anchico (Otalvaro 89), Perlaza, Gordillo, Seijas, Morelo (Borja 74), Angulo (Perez 85).

2nd leg

Dec 9
Santa Fe 0
Huracan 0
Agg 0-0; Santa Fe 3-1 on pens
Aet. **Ref:** Lopes (Bra)
Santa Fe: Zapata - Anchico (Otalvaro 108), Mina, Meza, Balanta, Roa, Perlaza, Gordillo (Perez 72), Seijas, Angulo (Borja 46), Morelo.
Huracan: Diaz - San Roman, Nervo, Mancinelli, Balbi, Bogado, Vismara, Espinoza (Torassa 97; Arano 120), Montenegro (Distefano 78), Toranzo, Abila. *Sent off: Abila117.*

Previous winners (most recent)

2011 Universidad de Chile (Chl)
2012 Sao Paulo (Bra)
2013 Lanus (Arg)
2014 River Plate (Arg)

BRAZIL

2015 – FINAL	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Corinthians (C)	38	24	9	5	71	31	81
Atl Mineiro	38	21	6	11	65	47	69
Gremio	38	20	8	10	52	32	68
Sao Paulo	38	18	8	12	53	47	62
Internacional	38	17	9	12	39	38	60
Sport	38	15	14	9	53	38	59
Santos	38	16	10	12	59	41	58
Cruzeiro	38	15	10	13	44	35	55
Palmeiras	38	15	8	15	60	51	53
Atl Paranaense	38	14	9	15	43	48	51
Ponte Preta	38	13	12	13	41	40	51
Flamengo	38	15	4	19	45	53	49
Fluminense	38	14	5	19	40	49	47
Chapecoense	38	12	11	15	34	44	47
Coritiba	38	11	11	16	31	42	44
Figueirense	38	11	10	17	36	50	43
Avai (R)	38	11	9	18	38	60	42
Vasco (R)	38	10	11	17	28	54	41
Goias (R)	38	10	8	20	39	49	38
Joinville (R)	38	7	10	21	26	48	31

Previous champions (most recent)

2009 Flamengo
2010 Fluminense
2011 Corinthians
2012 Fluminense
2013 Cruzeiro
2014 Cruzeiro

CHILE

2015-16 APERTURA – FINAL[1]	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Colo Colo (C)	14	11	0	3	23	12	33
Univ Catolica	15	10	2	3	33	15	32
U Concepcion	15	9	1	5	29	19	28
Palestino	15	8	4	3	23	17	28
Audax Italiano	15	7	5	3	22	19	26
U Espanola	15	7	3	5	30	20	24
O'Higgins	15	7	2	6	23	23	23
Cobresal	15	6	0	9	23	28	18
S Wanderers	14	4	5	5	18	18	17
San Marcos	15	5	2	8	18	20	17
Univ de Chile	15	4	5	6	24	30	17
Huachipato	15	4	4	7	16	21	16
Dep Iquique	15	4	4	7	20	28	16
U La Calera	15	4	3	8	13	27	15
San Luis	15	4	1	10	18	24	13
Antofagasta	15	2	5	8	11	23	11

No relegation after apertura
[1]Pending the result of the Santiago Wanderers v Colo Colo game, which was called off because of fighting among fans on the final matchday

Previous champions (most recent)

2012 (ap) Universidad de Chile
(cl) Huachipato
2013 (trans) Union Espanola
2013-14 (ap) O'Higgins
(cl) Colo Colo
2014-15 (ap) Universidad de Chile
(cl) Cobresal

PARAGUAY

2015 Clausura Decider[1]

Dec 9: Cerro Porteno 1 Olimpia 2.
[1]Staged because Olimpia and Cerro Porteno finished level on points (see below)

2015 CLAUSURA – FINAL	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Olimpia	22	13	5	4	40	22	44
Cerro Porteno	22	14	2	6	32	23	44
Guarani	22	12	3	7	52	29	39
Libertad	22	9	11	2	35	23	38
Capiata	22	9	6	7	31	34	33
Sol America	22	7	5	10	35	35	26
Santani (R)	22	7	5	10	29	37	26
General Diaz	22	6	6	10	18	35	24
Luqueno	22	6	5	11	39	43	23
Rubio Nu	22	5	7	10	22	29	22
S Lorenzo (R)	22	5	7	10	29	38	22
Nacional	22	5	6	11	21	35	21

Relegation determined by points-per-game average over 3 most recent seasons

Previous champions (most recent)

2012 (ap) Cerro Porteno
(cl) Libertad
2013 (ap) Nacional
(cl) Cerro Porteno
2014 (ap) Libertad
(cl) Libertad
2015 (ap) Cerro Porteno

PERU

2015 Clausura Decider[1]

Dec 2: Melgar 1 Garcilaso 1 (Melgar 4-2 on pens).
[1]Staged because Melgar and Garcilaso finished level on points (see below)

2015 CLAUSURA – FINAL	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Melgar	16	8	5	3	29	11	29
Garcilaso	16	8	5	3	26	16	29
Universitario	16	8	4	4	26	20	28
Sp Cristal	16	7	6	3	35	24	27
Cesar Vallejo	16	8	3	5	18	20	27
Sp Huancayo[2]	16	8	4	4	28	20	25
U San Martin	16	7	3	6	17	17	24
UT Cajamarca	16	6	5	5	18	15	23
Juan Aurich	16	5	4	7	22	25	19
Ayacucho	16	5	4	7	22	26	19
U Comercio	16	5	3	8	27	32	18
Municipal	16	4	6	6	13	22	18
Alianza Lima	16	4	5	7	18	21	17
Alianza Atl'ico	16	4	4	8	20	29	16
Sp Loreto (R)	16	3	5	8	13	21	14
Cienciano[3] (R)	16	4	6	6	16	19	12
Leon[4] (R)	16	3	6	7	21	31	11

Relegation determined by points gained in combined apertura/clausura table
[2]3pts deducted [3]6pts deducted [4]4pts deducted

Overall 2015 season play-offs

(open to the winner of the season-opening Inca tournament, Cesar Vallejo, the apertura, Sporting Cristal, and the clausura, Melgar, plus the highest-placed team in the combined apertura/clausura table apart from the 3 tournament winners, Garcilaso)

Semi-finals

1st legs - Dec 6; 2nd legs - Dec 9
Melgar v Garcilaso 1-0, 4-0 (agg 5-0)
Sporting Cristal v Cesar Vallejo 3-1, 3-4 (agg 6-5)

3rd-place match

1st leg - Dec12; 2nd leg - Dec15
Garcilaso v Cesar Vallejo 1-0, 0-3 (agg 1-3)

2015 Championship Final

1st leg - Dec13; 2nd leg - Dec16
Sporting Cristal v Melgar 2-2, 2-3 (agg 4-5)

Previous champions (most recent)

2011 Juan Aurich
2012 Sporting Cristal
2013 Universitario
2014 Sporting Cristal

URUGUAY

2015-16 APERTURA – FINAL	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Penarol[1]	15	9	4	2	28	17	31
Nacional	15	9	3	3	32	21	30
Cerro	15	9	1	5	25	19	28
Wanderers	15	6	6	3	22	16	24
River Plate	15	7	2	6	31	25	23
Fenix	15	6	5	4	17	12	23
Danubio	15	6	4	5	21	13	22
Defensor	15	6	3	6	25	25	21
Tanque Sisley	15	5	4	6	17	17	19
Rentistas	15	5	3	7	18	19	18
Sud America	15	4	6	5	17	22	18
Liverpool	15	5	3	7	15	24	18
Plaza	15	3	8	4	15	16	17
Racing	15	4	5	6	21	26	17
Juventud	15	4	3	8	14	25	15
Villa Teresa	15	1	2	12	9	30	5

No relegation after apertura
[1]Penarol will enter the end-of-season play-offs to decide the 2015-16 champions

VENEZUELA

Transitional tournament play-offs

Quarter-finals

1st legs - Nov 22; 2nd legs - Nov 25
Aragua v Zulia 0-0, 1-1
(agg 1-1, Aragua on away goals)
Caracas v Zamora 1-1, 1-3 (agg 2-4)
Lara v La Guaira 0-2, 0-2 (agg 0-4)
Mineros v Tachira 4-1, 0-2 (agg 4-3)

Semi-finals

1st legs - Nov 29; 2nd legs - Dec 2
Aragua v La Guaira 0-2, 0-2 (agg 0-4)
Mineros v Zamora 2-3, 1-4 (agg 3-7)

Final

1st leg - Dec 9; 2nd leg - Dec13
Zamora v La Guaira 2-0, 0-1 (agg 2-1)

CONCACAF

CONCACAF CHAMPIONS LEAGUE

Quarter-finals draw

Los Angeles Galaxy (USA) v Santos Laguna (Mex)
Queretaro (Mex) v DC United (USA)
Seattle Sounders (USA) v America (Mex)
Tigres (Mex) v Real Salt Lake (USA)
1st legs - Feb 23/24; 2nd legs - Mar1/2

GUYANA

2015 Championship Final
Nov 29: Slingerz 3 Alpha United 2.

MEXICO

2015-16 APERTURA – REGULAR – FINAL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Pumas (Q)	17	11	2	4	37	20	35
Toluca (Q)	17	10	2	5	33	24	32
Leon (Q)	17	10	0	7	32	31	30
Jaguares (Q)	17	8	5	4	31	27	29
Tigres (Q)	17	8	4	5	26	16	28
America (Q)	17	9	1	7	30	21	28
Puebla (Q)	17	8	3	6	22	20	27
Veracruz (Q)	17	8	3	6	23	27	27
Monterrey	17	6	5	6	32	29	23
Morelia	17	7	2	8	26	26	23
Queretaro	17	6	4	7	25	25	22
Pachuca	17	6	3	8	30	33	21
Guadalajara	17	6	3	8	23	26	21
Cruz Azul	17	5	5	7	19	25	20
Santos	17	4	5	8	21	24	17
Atlas	17	5	2	10	17	28	17
Tijuana	17	5	1	11	21	30	16
Dorados	17	3	6	8	13	29	15

The top 8 qualified for the apertura quarter-finals; no relegation after apertura

Quarter-finals
1st legs - Nov 25/26; 2nd legs - Nov 28/29
America v Leon 4-1, 1-2 (agg 5-3)
Puebla v Toluca 2-2, 0-1 (agg 2-3)
Tigres v Jaguares 2-1, 1-0 (agg 3-1)
Veracruz v Pumas 1-0, 0-1 (agg 1-1, Pumas went through on better regular-season record)

Semi-finals
1st legs - Dec 3; 2nd legs - Dec 6
America v Pumas 0-3, 3-1 (agg 3-4)
Tigres v Toluca 0-0, 2-0 (agg 2-0)

2015-16 Apertura Final
1st leg - Dec10; 2nd leg - Dec13
Tigres v Pumas 3-0, 1-4 (aet) (agg 4-4, Tigres 4-2 on pens)

PANAMA

2015-16 Apertura Final
Dec 5: Arabe Unido 1 Chorrillo 1 (aet, Arabe Unido 3-0 on pens).

UNITED STATES

2015 – REGULAR: EASTERN CONFERENCE – FINAL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
N York RB (Q)	34	18	6	10	62	43	60
Columbus (Q)	34	15	8	11	58	53	53
Montreal (Q)	34	15	6	13	48	44	51
DC United (Q)	34	15	6	13	43	45	51
N England (Q)	34	14	8	12	48	47	50
Toronto (Q)	34	15	4	15	58	58	49
Orlando	34	12	8	14	46	56	44
New York City	34	10	7	17	49	58	37
Philadelphia	34	10	7	17	42	55	37
Chicago	34	8	6	20	43	58	30

2015 – REGULAR: WESTERN CONFERENCE – FINAL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Dallas (Q)	34	18	6	10	52	39	60
Vancouver (Q)	34	16	5	13	45	36	53
Portland (Q)	34	15	8	11	41	39	53
Seattle (Q)	34	15	6	13	44	36	51
Los Angeles (Q)	34	14	9	11	56	46	51
Kansas City (Q)	34	14	9	11	48	45	51
San Jose	34	13	8	13	41	39	47
Houston	34	11	9	14	42	49	42
Salt Lake	34	11	8	15	38	48	41
Colorado	34	9	10	15	33	43	37

The top 6 in both conferences qualified for the championship play-offs, the teams placed 3rd to 6th going into the 1st round, the top 2 directly into the quarter-finals (conference semi-finals); no relegation from this league

1st round
Oct 28: DC United 2 New England 1; Seattle 3 Los Angeles 2.
Oct 29: Montreal 3 Toronto 0; Portland 2 Kansas City 2 (aet, Portland 7-6 on pens).

Quarter-finals (conference semi-finals)
1st legs - Nov1; 2nd legs - Nov 8
DC United v New York Red Bulls 0-1, 0-1 (agg 0-2)
Montreal v Columbus 2-1, 1-3 (aet) (agg 3-4)
Portland v Vancouver 0-0, 2-0 (agg 2-0)
Seattle v Dallas 2-1, 1-2 (aet) (agg 3-3, Dallas 4-2 on pens)

Semi-finals (conference finals)
1st legs - Nov 22; 2nd legs - Nov 29
Columbus v New York Red Bulls 2-0, 0-1 (agg 2-1)
Portland v Dallas 3-1, 2-2 (agg 5-3)

2015 Championship Final (MLS Cup)
Dec 6: Columbus 1 Portland 2.

ASIA

AFC CHAMPIONS LEAGUE

Preliminary & play-off rounds entrants

Adelaide United (Aus), Al Ittihad (Sau), Al Jazira (UAE), Al Sadd (Qat), Al Shabab (UAE), Al Wehdat (Jor), Bunyodkor (Uzb), Chonburi (Tha), El Jaish (Qat), Hanoi T&T (Vie), *Japan 4th reps*, Johor Darul Ta'zim (Mly), Kitchee (HK), Mohun Bagan (Ind), Muangthong United (Tha), Naft Tehran (Irn), Pohang Steelers (SKo), Shandong Luneng (Chn), Shanghai SIPG (Chn), Tampines Rovers (Sin), Yangon United (Mya)

Group stage draw

Group A
Al Nasr (UAE), Lokomotiv Tashkent (Uzb), Sepahan (Irn), *play-off round winner*

Group B
Al Nassr (Sau), Lekhwiya (Qat), Zob Ahan (Irn), *play-off round winner*

Group C
Al Hilal (Sau), Pakhtakor (Uzb), Tractor Sazi (Irn), *play-off round winner*

Group D
Al Ahli (Sau), Al Ain (UAE), Nasaf Qarshi (Uzb), *play-off round winner*

Group E
Binh Duong (Vie), Jeonbuk Motors (SKo), Jiangsu Sainty (Chn), *play-off round winner*

Group F
Buriram United (Tha), Sanfrecce Hiroshima (Jap), Seoul (SKo), *play-off round winner*

Group G
Melbourne Victory (Aus), Suwon Bluewings (SKo), *Japan 2nd reps, play-off round winner*

Group H
Guangzhou Evergrande (Chn), Sydney (Aus), *Japan 3rd reps, play-off round winner*

Ties to be played Feb 23-May 4

● *The top 2 in each group will qualify for the1st knockout round (last16)*

BRUNEI

2015 – FINAL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
MS ABDB (C)	18	16	1	1	55	12	49
Indera	18	13	3	2	54	19	42
Najip	18	12	0	6	35	32	36
Wijaya	18	9	4	5	46	34	31
Tabuan Muda	18	9	3	6	37	28	30
Jerudong	18	8	2	8	47	33	26
MS PDB	18	4	4	10	29	35	16
Lun Bawang	18	3	3	12	26	49	12
IKLS	18	4	0	14	27	62	12
Kilanas	18	2	0	16	22	74	6

CAMBODIA

2015 Championship Final
1st leg - Nov 22; 2nd leg - Dec12
Nagaworld v Phnom Penh Crown 0-2, 3-1 (aet) (agg 3-3, Phnom Penh Crown 3-2 on pens)

JAPAN

2015 – 1ST STAGE – FINAL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Urawa (Q)[1]	17	12	5	0	39	17	41
Tokyo	17	11	2	4	24	18	35
Sanfrecce	17	10	4	3	29	16	34
Gamba	17	9	5	3	24	13	32
Kawasaki	17	9	3	5	32	26	30
Yokohama	17	7	5	5	21	17	26
Vegalta	17	6	5	6	27	20	23
Kashima	17	6	4	7	27	25	22
Nagoya	17	6	4	7	18	18	22
Shonan	17	6	4	7	20	24	22
Sagan	17	5	5	7	22	32	20
Ventforet	17	6	2	9	12	22	20
Vissel	17	4	7	6	17	19	19
Kashiwa	17	4	6	7	22	25	18
Matsumoto	17	4	3	10	17	26	15
Montedio	17	3	5	9	14	24	14
Albirex	17	3	5	9	20	33	14
Shimizu	17	3	4	10	22	32	13

2015 – 2ND STAGE – FINAL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Sanfrecce (Q)[1]	17	13	1	3	44	14	40
Kashima	17	12	1	4	30	16	37
Gamba (Q)[1]	17	9	4	4	32	24	31
Urawa	17	9	4	4	30	23	31
Yokohama	17	8	5	4	24	15	29
Tokyo	17	8	4	5	21	15	28
Kawasaki	17	8	3	6	30	22	27
Kashiwa	17	8	3	6	24	18	27
Shonan	17	7	5	5	20	20	26
Nagoya	17	7	3	7	26	30	24
Albirex	17	5	5	7	21	25	20
Sagan	17	4	8	5	15	22	20
Vissel	17	6	1	10	27	30	19
Ventforet	17	4	5	8	14	21	17
Matsumoto (R)	17	3	4	10	13	28	13
Vegalta	17	3	3	11	17	28	12
Shimizu (R)	17	2	6	9	15	33	12
Montedio (R)	17	1	7	9	10	29	10

Relegation determined by points gained in the combined 1st/2nd stage table

[1]*The 2 stage winners and Gamba Osaka, the highest-placed team in the combined1st/2nd stage table apart from the 2 stage winners, qualified for the championship play-offs. Sanfrecce Hiroshima had most points in the combined table so qualified automatically for the Final*

Semi-final
Nov 28: Urawa Reds 1 Gamba Osaka 3 (aet).

2015 Championship Final
1st leg - Dec 2; 2nd leg - Dec 5
Gamba Osaka v Sanfrecce Hiroshima 2-3, 1-1 (agg 3-4)

SOUTH KOREA

Division split after the 33-round regular season; full record carried forward

2015 – CHAMPIONSHIP GROUP – FINAL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Jeonbuk (C)	38	22	7	9	57	39	73
Suwon B	38	19	10	9	60	43	67
Pohang	38	18	12	8	49	32	66
Seoul	38	17	11	10	52	44	62
Seongnam	38	15	15	8	41	33	60
Jeju	38	14	8	16	55	56	50

2015 – RELEGATION GROUP – FINAL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Ulsan	38	13	14	11	54	45	53
Incheon	38	13	12	13	35	32	51
Jeonnam	38	12	13	13	46	51	49
Gwangju	38	10	12	16	35	44	42
Busan (R)[1]	38	5	11	22	30	55	26
Daejeon (R)	38	4	7	27	32	72	19

[1]*Relegated after losing rel/prom play-off*

SRI LANKA

2015 – CHAMP'SHIP PLAY-OFF GROUP – FINAL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Colombo[1] (C)	7	4	2	1	17	7	17
Renown	7	5	2	0	17	8	17
Army[1]	7	3	3	1	15	10	15
Air Force[2]	7	2	2	3	8	10	10
Crystal Palace[3]	7	2	3	2	12	15	10
Navy	7	2	3	2	14	16	9
Blue Star[2]	7	0	4	3	7	11	6
Java Lane[3]	7	0	1	6	4	17	2

Bonus pts were awarded for finishing position in the 2 regular-season groups – [1]3pts for1st place, [2]2pts for 2nd place, [3]1pt for 3rd place

TAIWAN

2015-16 – 1ST STAGE – FINAL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Tatung[1]	7	5	2	0	17	5	17
Taipower	7	5	1	1	28	3	16
NSTC	7	4	0	3	16	12	12
T Sports Univ	7	3	2	2	17	11	11
Ming Chuan	7	3	2	2	13	9	11
Royal Blues	7	3	1	3	17	12	10
Taichung City	7	1	0	6	9	30	3
Air Source	7	0	0	7	3	38	0

[1]*Tatung will meet the 2nd stage winner in a play-off to decide the 2015-16 champions*

THAILAND

2015 – FINAL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Buriram (C)	34	25	9	0	98	24	84
Muangthong	34	21	8	5	81	35	71
Suphanburi	34	16	11	7	60	39	59
Chonburi	34	15	12	7	62	44	57
Bangkok Utd	34	16	9	9	59	47	57
Bangkok Glass	34	15	11	8	47	38	56
Ratchaburi	34	17	4	13	48	50	55
Nakhon R'sima	34	13	10	11	37	43	49
Chiangrai Utd	34	12	8	14	42	57	44
Army United	34	11	8	15	43	47	41
Osotspa	34	10	9	15	40	54	39
Chainat	34	9	10	15	42	53	37
Sisaket	34	9	9	16	30	47	36
Saraburi	34	8	11	15	41	56	35
Navy	34	10	5	19	42	65	35
BEC Tero S (R)	34	7	14	13	42	51	35
Port (R)	34	10	3	21	31	49	33
TOT (R)	34	3	7	24	25	71	16

AFRICA

CONFEDERATION CUP

Final

1st leg
Nov 21
Orlando Pirates (SAf) 1 (Gabuza 37)
Etoile Sahel (Tun) 1 (Jemal 87)
HT: 1-0. **Ref:** Sikazwe (Zam)
Orlando Pirates: Ovono - Jele, Gcaba, Siyabonga Sangweni, Matlaba, Rakhale, Ntshumayelo, Masalesa (Sarr 83), Makola, Erasmus (Motupa 90), Gabuza.
Etoile Sahel: Jebali - Abderrazak, Jemal, Boughattas, Naguez, Brigui (Saada 87), Ben Amor, Kom, Msakni (Diogo 85), Lahmar, Bounedjah.

2nd leg
Nov 29
Etoile Sahel 1 (Jemal 24)
Orlando Pirates 0
HT: 1-0. **Ref:** Alioum (Cam)
Etoile Sahel 2-1 on agg
Etoile Sahel: Mathlouthi - Naguez, Trabelsi, Jemal, Boughattas, Kom, Lahmar, Brigui, Tej (Saada 84), Msakni, Bounedjah (Diogo 20; Bedoui 90+3).
Orlando Pirates: Ovono - Jele, Gcaba, Siyabonga Sangweni, Matlaba, Rakhale (Myeni 71), Motupa, Masalesa, Makola (Masuku 71), Erasmus, Gabuza.

Previous winners (most recent)

2010	FUS Rabat (Mor)
2011	Maghreb Fes (Mor)
2012	AC Leopards (Con)
2013	CS Sfaxien (Tun)
2014	Al Ahly (Egy)

NIGER

2015 – FINAL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Douanes (C)	26	16	7	3	45	24	55
Sahel	26	14	6	6	42	21	48
AS GNN	26	13	8	5	30	13	47
FAN	26	12	10	4	35	18	46
Olympic	26	12	6	8	33	26	42
Nigelec	26	12	5	9	26	21	41
Akokana	26	10	8	8	24	22	38
Dan Kassawa	26	9	8	9	24	27	35
Police	26	9	6	11	30	28	33
US GN	26	7	8	11	33	32	29
Urana	26	5	10	11	19	25	25
Espoir	26	4	9	13	16	41	21
Kandadji (R)[1]	26	5	5	16	28	47	20
Zumunta (R)	26	4	4	18	10	50	16

[1]*Relegated after losing rel/prom play-off*

REUNION

2015 – FINAL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts[1]
St-Pierroise (C)	22	15	4	3	45	16	71
St-Louisienne	22	12	7	3	28	12	65
St-Marienne	22	12	5	5	41	20	63
Excelsior	22	11	8	3	35	19	63
St-Pauloise	22	11	2	9	26	22	57
Marsouins	22	11	2	9	24	25	57
Jeanne d'Arc	22	8	4	10	27	29	50
SDEFA	22	6	7	9	14	23	47
Petite-Ile	22	5	5	12	19	34	42
Capricorne	22	5	4	13	21	40	41
Bras-Fusil (R)	22	4	4	14	13	32	38
Benedictins (R)	22	3	6	13	14	35	37

[1] 4pts for a win, 2pts for a draw, 1pt for a defeat

SAO TOME E PRINCIPE

2015 National Championship Final

1st leg - Nov15; 2nd leg - Nov 21

Sporting Praia Cruz v Sporting Principe
4-2, 1-2 (agg 5-4)

ZIMBABWE

2015 – FINAL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Chicken Inn (C)	30	18	7	5	45	23	61
Dynamos	30	15	12	3	36	20	57
Platinum	30	15	10	5	52	23	55
Triangle	30	13	10	7	46	25	49
CAPS United	30	11	13	6	29	23	46
Highlanders	30	11	8	11	37	31	41
Harare City	30	8	15	7	29	27	39
Hwange	30	9	12	9	32	32	39
Chapungu	30	9	12	9	26	27	39
ZPC Kariba	30	9	11	10	40	37	38
How Mine	30	8	11	11	28	34	35
Tsholotsho	30	6	13	11	20	30	31
Buffaloes (R)	30	6	11	13	23	41	29
Flame Lily (R)	30	4	14	12	24	35	26
Wha Wha (R)	30	4	11	15	17	51	23
Dongo (R)	30	4	10	16	18	43	22

OCEANIA

OFC CHAMPIONS LEAGUE

Preliminary round group

Kiwi (Soa), Tupapa Maraerenga (Coo), Utulei Youth (AmS), Veitongo (Ton)

● *To be played in the Cook Islands, Jan 26-30; the winner will qualify for the group stage*

COOK ISLANDS

2015 – FINAL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Tupapa (C)	12	8	1	3	32	19	25
Titikaveka	12	7	0	5	28	22	21
Puaikura	12	6	2	4	27	17	20
Matavera	12	6	2	4	24	16	20
Nikao Sok'tak	12	6	0	6	16	26	18
Takuvaine	12	5	0	7	22	23	15
Avatiu	12	1	1	10	13	39	4

NEW CALEDONIA

2015 – FINAL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts[1]
Magenta (C)	22	15	3	4	52	29	70
Hienghene[2]	22	14	6	2	60	22	60
Gaitcha[3]	22	12	7	3	57	21	56
Mont-Dore[3]	22	11	3	8	56	44	49
Wetr	22	7	6	9	49	52	49
Lossi[2]	22	8	8	6	48	36	44
Wacaele[4]	22	11	3	8	42	40	37
Ne Drehu[5] (R)[8]	22	11	4	7	50	37	36
Tiga Sport[6]	22	6	4	12	39	46	31
Belep[6]	22	4	6	12	35	62	27
Auteuil[6] (R)	22	1	4	17	20	69	16
Baco[7] (R)	22	4	2	16	33	83	6

[1] 4pts for a win, 2pts for a draw, 1pt for a defeat
[2] 10pts deducted [3] 9pts deducted
[4] 21pts deducted [5] 23pts deducted
[6] 13pts deducted [7] 30pts deducted
(all deductions – for non-compliance with regulations – are subject to appeal)
[8] *Ne Drehu relegated as the lowest-placed team not from the principal island of Grande Terre in the division*

Internationals

CECAFA CUP

Played in Ethiopia

Group A

Nov 21 - Addis Ababa
Ethiopia 0
Rwanda 1 (Tuyisenge 54)
HT: 0-0

Nov 22 - Addis Ababa
Somalia 0
Tanzania 4 (Bocco pen 12, 54, Maguri 17, 66)
HT: 0-2

Nov 24 - Awassa
Rwanda 1 (Tuyisenge 86)
Tanzania 2 (Juma 23, Msuva 75)
HT: 0-1

Nov 25 - Awassa
Somalia 0
Ethiopia 2 (Mohammed 15, Behailu Girma 82)
HT: 0-1

Nov 27 - Awassa
Rwanda 3 (Habimana 6, Tuyisenge 52, Ngomirakiza 58)
Somalia 0
HT: 1-0

Nov 28 - Awassa
Tanzania 1 (Msuva 51)
Ethiopia 1 (Salim og 90)
HT: 0-0

CECAFA CUP – GROUP A

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Tanzania (Q)	3	2	1	0	7	2	7
Rwanda (Q)	3	2	0	1	5	2	6
Ethiopia (Q)	3	1	1	1	3	2	4
Somalia	3	0	0	3	0	9	0

Group B

Nov 21 - Addis Ababa
Burundi 1 (Kavumbagu 39)
Zanzibar 0
HT: 1-0

Nov 22 - Addis Ababa
Kenya 2 (Keli 28, Olunga 49)
Uganda 0
HT: 1-0

Nov 24 - Awassa
Zanzibar 0
Uganda 4 (Miya 9, pen 17, Ssekisambu 47, Okhuti 78)
HT: 0-2
Sent off: Mwadini16, Mudathir 75 (both Zanzibar)

Nov 25 - Awassa
Kenya 1 (Olunga 42)
Burundi 1 (Tambwe 11)
HT: 1-1

Nov 27 - Awassa
Zanzibar 3 (Suleiman 44, 74, Khamis 57)
Kenya 1 (Keli 90+2)
HT: 1-0

Nov 28 - Awassa
Uganda 1 (Kalanda 69)
Burundi 0
HT: 0-0

CECAFA CUP – GROUP B

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Uganda (Q)	3	2	0	1	5	2	6
Kenya (Q)	3	1	1	1	4	4	4
Burundi	3	1	1	1	2	2	4
Zanzibar	3	1	0	2	3	6	3

Group C

Nov 23 - Bahir Dar
South Sudan 2 (Martinez 28, Abuyo 72)
Djibouti 0
HT: 1-0

Nov 23 - Bahir Dar
Sudan 1 (A El Tahir 20)
Malawi 2 (Msowoya 15, Sailesi 32)
HT: 1-2

Nov 25 - Bahir Dar
Malawi 3 (Phiri pen 30, J Banda 35, Msowoya 75)
Djibouti 0
HT: 2-0
Sent off: Kuwali (Malawi) 41

Nov 25 - Bahir Dar
South Sudan 0
Sudan 0

Nov 27 - Bahir Dar
South Sudan 2 (Saeed 7, Martinez 90+2)
Malawi 0
HT: 1-0

Nov 27 - Bahir Dar
Djibouti 0
Sudan 4 (A El Tahir 15, 65, 78, Mamoun 25)
HT: 0-2

CECAFA CUP – GROUP C

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Sth Sudan (Q)	3	2	1	0	4	0	7
Malawi (Q)	3	2	0	1	5	3	6
Sudan (Q)	3	1	1	1	5	2	4
Djibouti	3	0	0	3	0	9	0

● *Top 2 in each group and the 2 3rd-placed teams with best record qualified for quarter-finals*

Quarter-finals

Nov 30 - Addis Ababa
Uganda 2 (Miya 5, Okhuti 48)
Malawi 0
HT: 1-0

Nov 30 - Addis Ababa
Tanzania 1 (Bocco 25)
Ethiopia 1 (Gatoch pen 57)
HT: 1-0. *Ethiopia 4-3 on pens (no extra-time)*

Dec1 - Addis Ababa
South Sudan 0
Sudan 0 *Sudan 5-3 on pens (no extra-time)*

Dec1 - Addis Ababa
Rwanda 0
Kenya 0 *Rwanda 5-3 on pens (no extra-time)*

Semi-finals

Dec 3 - Addis Ababa
Sudan 1 (A El Tahir 97)
Rwanda 1 (Mugiraneza 110)
HT: 0-0. **90mins:** 0-0
Sent off: Al Madina (Sudan) 20; Songa (Rwanda)119
Rwanda 4-2 on pens (aet)

Dec 3 - Addis Ababa
Uganda 0
Ethiopia 0 *Uganda 5-3 on pens (aet)*

3rd-place match

Dec 5 - Addis Ababa
Sudan 1 (Yagoub 82)
Ethiopia 1 (Mamo 56)
HT: 0-0. *Ethiopia 5-4 on pens (no extra-time)*

Final

Dec 5 - Addis Ababa
Uganda 1 (Okhuti 15)
Rwanda 0
HT: 1-0

FRIENDLIES

Tuesday, December 8

Dec 8 - Managua
Nicaragua 5 (Barrera pen 19, 69, Cuadra 52, Leguias pen 57, Pavon 79)
Cuba 0
HT: 1-0

Friday, December 11

Dec11 - Esteli
Nicaragua 1 (B Garcia 90)
Cuba 0
HT: 0-0

KEY TO TABLES
(C) = champions (R) = relegated
(Q) = qualified for next stage
(EL) = enter Europa League

January 2016 Vol 56 No 4

EDITOR Gavin Hamilton
ASSISTANT EDITOR Nich Hills
DESIGN DIRECTOR Kevin Eason
DESIGN EDITOR Jamie Latchford
DEPUTY DESIGN EDITOR Daniel Franklin
PICTURE EDITOR Duncan Bond
NEWS EDITOR Jamie Rainbow
EDITORIAL SECRETARY June Hiscock

PICTURES
Pictures copyright: Press Association Images, Getty Images, Action Images and Reuters

Thanks this issue to
Dean Chillmaid, Debbie Millett, Peter Neish, Dave Rallis

EDITORIAL
Blue Fin Building, 110 Southwark Street, London SE1 0SU
Tel: +44 (0) 20 3148 4817
Fax: +44 (0) 20 3148 8130

ADVERTISING AND SPONSORSHIP
Tadeyo Akitoye, Richard Torey
Tel: +44 (0) 20 3148 2515
+44 (0) 20 3148 2823
E-mail: tadeyo.akitoye@timeinc.com, richard.torey@timeinc.com

PRODUCTION MANAGER Tom Jennings
PUBLISHING DIRECTOR Hamish Dawson
MANAGING DIRECTOR Oswin Grady

Advertising +44 (0) 20 3148 2503
+44 (0) 20 3148 2823
Back issues +44 (0) 20 3148 4816
Binders +44 (0) 20 3148 4816

International licensing enquiries
+44 (0) 20 314 85490
E-mail: bianca.hamilton-foster@timeinc.com

Time Inc.

SUBSCRIPTIONS ORDER HOTLINE
+44 (0)844 848 0848
E-mail: ipcsubs@qss-uk.com

SUBSCRIPTIONS RATES
Annual sub is for 12 months (13 issues, prices include postage) UK: £59.99 Europe/Eire (inc. VAT): 98.85 euros (airmail) USA: $144.48 (airmail) Rest of world: £99.25 (airmail)

Periodicals paid at Rahway, NJ Postmaster: send address changes to *World Soccer*, c/o MAIL America, 365 Blair Road, Avenel NJ 07001, USA. USPS004075

SUBSCRIPTIONS DEPARTMENT
Rockwood House, 9-17 Perrymount Road, Haywards Heath, West Sussex RH16 3DH, England Tel: +44 (0) 1444 475 675

WorldSoccer is a member of ESM EUROPEAN SPORTS MEDIA

● A Bola (Portugal) ● De Telegraaf (Holland)
● Elf Voetbal (Holland) ● Fanatik (Turkey)
● Frankfurter Allgemeine (Germany)
● Goal News (Greece) ● Kicker (Germany)
● Marca (Spain) ● Nemzeti Sport (Hungary)
● So Foot (France) ● Sport-Express (Russia)
● Sport/Foot (Belgium) ● TIPS Bladet (Denmark)
● World Soccer (UK)

● Titan Sport (China) ● KickOff (S Africa)
● Netease (China) ● SportalKorea (S Korea).

LA LIGA

ATHLETIC BILBAO

GOALKEEPERS
13 Iago **HERRERIN** (27) 25.01.88
1 Gorka **IRAIZOZ** (34) 06.03.81

DEFENDERS
31 Yerai **ALVAREZ** (20) 24.01.95
24 Mikel **BALENZIAGA** (27) 29.02.88
2 Eneko **BOVEDA** (27) 14.12.88
16 Xabier **ETXEITA** (28) 31.10.87
4 Aymeric **LAPORTE** (Fra) (21) 27.05.94
30 Inigo **LEKUE** (22) 04.05.93
6 Mikel **SAN JOSE** (26) 30.05.89

MIDFIELDERS
23 Ager **AKETXE** (22) 30.12.93
7 **BENAT** (28) 19.02.87
3 Gorka **ELUSTONDO** (28) 18.03.87
5 Javier **ERASO** (25) 22.03.90
10 Oscar **DE MARCOS** (26) 14.04.89
22 Raul **GARCIA** (29) 11.07.86
18 Carlos **GURPEGI** (35) 19.08.80
8 Ander **ITURRASPE** (26) 08.03.89
17 Mikel **RICO** (31) 01.11.84
14 Markel **SUSAETA** (28) 14.12.87

FORWARDS
20 Aritz **ADURIZ** (34) 11.02.81
11 **IBAI** (26) 11.11.89
19 Iker **MUNIAIN** (23) 19.12.92
25 **SABIN** (23) 04.01.92
9 Kike **SOLA** (29) 25.02.86
21 Borja **VIGUERA** (28) 26.03.87
15 Inaki **WILLIAMS** (21) 15.06.94

COACH
Ernesto **VALVERDE** (51) 09.02.64

ATLETICO MADRID

GOALKEEPERS
1 Miguel Angel **MOYA** (31) 02.04.84
13 Jan **OBLAK** (Sln) (22) 07.01.93

DEFENDERS
18 Jesus **GAMEZ** (30) 10.04.85
24 Jose **GIMENEZ** (Uru) (20) 20.01.95
2 Diego **GODIN** (Uru) (29) 16.02.86
19 Lucas **HERNANDEZ** (Fra) (19) 14.02.96
20 **JUANFRAN** (30) 09.01.85
3 Filipe **LUIS** (Bra) (30) 09.08.85
4 Guilherme **SIQUEIRA** (Bra) (29) 28.04.86
15 Stefan **SAVIC** (Mne) (24) 08.01.91

MIDFIELDERS
21 Yannick **FERREIRA CARRASCO** (Blg) (22) 04.09.93
14 **GABI** (32) 10.07.83
6 **KOKE** (23) 08.01.92
17 Saul **NIGUEZ** (21) 21.11.94
22 Thomas **PARTEY** (Gha) (22) 13.07.93
5 **TIAGO** (Por) (34) 02.05.81
10 Oliver **TORRES** (21) 10.11.94

FORWARDS
16 Angel **CORREA** (20) 09.03.95
7 Antoine **GRIEZMANN** (Fra) (24) 21.03.91
11 Jackson **MARTINEZ** (Col) (29) 03.10.86
9 Fernando **TORRES** (31) 20.03.84
23 Luciano **VIETTO** (Arg) (22) 05.12.93

COACH
Diego **SIMEONE** (Arg) (45) 28.04.70

BARCELONA

GOALKEEPERS
13 Claudio **BRAVO** (Chl) (32) 13.04.83
25 Jordi **MASIP** (26) 03.01.89
31 Jose Aurelio **SUEREZ** (20) 18.12.95
1 Marc-Andre **TER STEGEN** (Ger) (23) 30.04.92

DEFENDERS
21 **ADRIANO** (Bra) (31) 26.10.84
18 Jordi **ALBA** (26) 21.03.89
6 Dani **ALVES** (Bra) (32) 06.05.83
15 Marc **BARTRA** (24) 15.01.91
2 **DOUGLAS** (Bra) (25) 06.08.90
30 Alex **GRIMALDO** (20) 20.09.95
14 Javier **MASCHERANO** (Arg) (31) 08.06.84
24 Jeremy **MATHIEU** (Fra) (32) 29.10.83
3 Gerard **PIQUE** (28) 02.02.87
23 Thomas **VERMAELEN** (Blg) (30) 14.11.85

MIDFIELDERS
- Arda **TURAN** (Tur) (28) 30.01.87
29 David **BABUNSKI** (Mac) (21) 01.03.94
5 Sergio **BUSQUETS** (27) 16.07.88
27 Juan **CAMARA** (21) 13.02.94
28 Gerard **GUMBAU** (21) 18.12.94
8 Andres **INIESTA** (31) 11.05.84
34 Wilfrid **KAPTOUM** (Cam) (19) 07.07.96
12 **RAFINHA** (Bra) (22) 12.02.93
4 Ivan **RAKITIC** (Cro) (27) 10.03.88
20 Sergi **ROBERTO** (23) 07.02.92
26 Sergi **SAMPER** (20) 20.01.95
- Aleix **VIDAL** (26) 21.08.89

FORWARDS
33 Aitor **CANTALAPIEDRA** (19) 10.02.96
17 Munir **EL HADDADI** (20) 01.09.95
10 Lionel **MESSI** (Arg) (28) 24.06.87
11 **NEYMAR** (Bra) (23) 05.02.92
19 Sandro **RAMIREZ** (20) 09.07.95
9 Luis **SUAREZ** (Ur) (28) 24.01.87

COACH
Luis **ENRIQUE** (45) 08.05.70

BETIS

GOALKEEPERS
13 Antonio **ADAN** (28) 13.05.87
1 Dani **GIMENEZ** (32) 30.07.83
41 **PEDRO** (20) 21.01.95

DEFENDERS
4 **BRUNO** (25) 24.05.90
6 **JORDI** (28) 16.05.87
2 Francisco **MOLINERO** (30) 26.07.85
20 German **PEZZELLA** (Arg) (24) 27.06.91
12 Cristiano **PICCINI** (Ita) (23) 26.09.92
3 Amro **TAREK** (Egy) (23) 17.05.92
33 Francisco **VARELA** (21) 26.10.94
17 Heiko **WESTERMANN** (Ger) (32) 14.08.83

MIDFIELDERS
10 Dani **CEBALLOS** (19) 07.08.96
16 Alvaro **CEJUDO** (31) 29.01.84
15 Didier **DIGARD** (Fra) (29) 12.07.86
52 **FABIAN** (19) 03.04.96
7 **JOAQUIN** (34) 21.07.81
5 Foued **KADIR** (Alg) (32) 05.12.83
- Javier **MATILLA** (27) 16.08.88
18 Alfred **N'DIAYE** (Sen) (25) 06.03.90
25 **PETROS** (Bra) (26) 29.05.89
14 Xavi **TORRES** (29) 21.11.86
21 Alvaro **VADILLO** (21) 12.09.94
23 Rafael **VAN DER VAART** (Hol) (32) 11.02.83
11 Juan Manuel **VARGAS** (Per) (32) 05.10.83

FORWARDS
24 Ruben **CASTRO** (34) 27.06.81
19 Jorge **MOLINA** (33) 22.04.82
22 Francisco **PORTILLO** (25) 13.06.90
8 Vincenzo **RENNELLA** (Ita) (27) 08.10.88
9 Ricky **VAN WOLFSWINKEL** (Hol) (26) 27.01.89

COACH
Pepe **MEL** (52) 28.02.63

CELTA VIGO

GOALKEEPERS
1 Sergio **ALVAREZ** (29) 03.08.86
13 Ruben **BLANCO** (20) 25.07.95
26 Nestor **DIAZ** (23) 26.06.92

DEFENDERS
22 Gustavo **CABRAL** (Arg) (30) 14.10.85
3 Andreu **FONTAS** (26) 14.11.89
20 Sergi **GOMEZ** (23) 28.07.92
19 **JONNY** (21) 03.03.94
2 Hugo **MALLO** (24) 22.06.91
21 Carles **PLANAS** (24) 04.03.91

MIDFIELDERS
16 Dejan **DRAZIC** (Ser) (20) 26.09.95
8 Pablo **HERNANDEZ** (Chl) (29) 24.10.86
24 Augusto **FERNANDEZ** (Arg) (29) 10.04.86
28 Borja **FERNANDEZ** (20) 16.08.95
17 Levy **MADINDA** (Gab) (23) 11.06.92
14 Fabian **ORELLANA** (Chl) (29) 27.01.86
6 Nemanja **RADOJA** (Ser) (22) 06.02.93
23 Josep **SENE** (24) 10.12.91
18 Daniel **WASS** (Den) (26) 31.05.89

FORWARDS
9 Iago **ASPAS** (28) 11.08.87
7 Theo **BONGONDA** (Blg) (20) 20.11.95
11 John **GUIDETTI** (Swe) (23) 15.04.92
31 Borja **IGLESIAS** (22) 17.01.93
10 **NOLITO** (29) 15.10.86

COACH
Eduardo **BERIZZO** (Arg) (46) 13.11.69

LAS PALMAS

GOALKEEPERS
1 Raul **LIZOAIN** (24) 27.01.91
30 Dani **LORENZO** (22) 20.04.93
13 Javi **VARAS** (33) 10.09.82

DEFENDERS
3 Antolin **ALCARAZ** (Par) (33) 30.07.82
6 **ANGEL** (34) 10.03.81
16 **AYTHAMI** (29) 02.04.86
17 Pedro **BIGAS** (25) 15.05.90
23 Dani **CASTELLANO** (28) 02.11.87
5 David **GARCIA** (33) 25.02.82
22 Javier **GARRIDO** (30) 15.03.85
2 David **SIMON** (25) 31.12.89

MIDFIELDERS
7 Nauzet **ALEMAN** (30) 25.02.85
18 Javi **CASTELLANO** (28) 02.11.87
19 Emmanuel **CULIO** (Arg) (32) 30.08.83
25 Nabil **EL ZHAR** (Mor) (29) 27.08.86
4 Vicente **GOMEZ** (27) 31.08.88
14 **HERNAN** (25) 26.08.90
11 **MOMO** (33) 15.07.82
12 Wakaso **MUBARAK** (Gha) (25) 25.07.90
15 **ROQUE** (26) 07.06.89
21 Juan Carlos **VALERON** (40) 17.06.75

FORWARDS
10 Sergio **ARAUJO** (Arg) (23) 28.01.92
9 **ASDRUBAL** (24) 13.03.91
8 Willian **JOSE** (Bra) (24) 23.11.91
24 **TANA** (25) 20.09.90
20 Jonathan **VIERA** (26) 21.10.89

COACH
Quique **SETIEN** (57) 27.09.58

LEVANTE

GOALKEEPERS
1 Jesus **FERNANDEZ** (27) 11.06.88
25 Diego **MARINO** (25) 09.05.90
13 **RUBEN** (31) 22.06.84

DEFENDERS
24 Zouhair **FEDDAL** (Mor) (26) 01.01.89
12 **JUANFRAN** (39) 15.07.76
15 Nikos **KARABELAS** (Gre) (31) 20.12.84
2 Ivan **LOPEZ** (22) 23.08.93
19 Pedro **LOPEZ** (32) 01.01.83
4 David **NAVARRO** (35) 25.05.80
3 **TONO** (26) 07.11.89
16 Angel **TRUJILLO** (28) 08.09.87

MIDFIELDERS
6 Victor **CAMARASA** (21) 28.05.94
8 Jefferson **LERMA** (Col) (21) 25.10.94
22 Jose **MARI** (28) 06.12.87
11 Jose Luis **MORALES** (28) 23.07.87
10 Ruben **GARCIA** (22) 14.07.93
5 **SIMAO** Mate (Moz) (27) 23.07.88
7 **VERZA** (29) 29.09.86
17 Jordi **XUMETRA** (30) 24.10.85

FORWARDS
20 **DEYVERSON** (Bra) (24) 08.05.91
23 Nabil **GHILAS** (Alg) (25) 20.04.90
14 **ROGER** Marti (24) 03.01.91
18 **VICTOR** Casadesus (28) 28.02.85

COACH
RUBI (45) 05.02.70

MALAGA

GOALKEEPERS
27 Aaron **ESCANDELL** (20) 27.09.95
1 Carlos **KAMENI** (Cam) (31) 18.02.84
13 Guillermo **OCHOA** (Mex) (30) 13.07.85

DEFENDERS
2 Raul **ALBENTOSA** (27) 07.09.88
15 Marcos **ANGELERI** (Arg) (32) 07.04.83
19 Arthur **BOKA** (IvC) (32) 02.04.83
4 Flavio **FERREIRA** (Por) (24) 19.10.91
21 Egor **FILIPENKO** (Bls) (27) 10.04.88
18 Roberto **ROSALES** (Ven) (27) 20.11.88
23 Miguel **TORRES** (29) 28.01.86
3 **WELIGTON** (Bra) (36) 26.08.79

MIDFIELDERS
11 Nordin **AMRABAT** (Mor) (28) 31.03.87
6 Ignacio **CAMACHO** (25) 04.05.90
7 Juan **CARLOS** (25) 30.03.90
17 **DUDA** (Por) (35) 27.06.80
8 Fabio **ESPINHO** (Por) (30) 18.08.85
31 Pablo **FORNALS** (19) 22.02.96
28 **JUANPI** (Ven) (21) 24.01.94
39 Javi **ONTIVEROS** (18) 09.09.97
14 **RECIO** (24) 11.01.91
22 Adnane **TIGHADOUINI** (Mor) (23) 30.10.92
12 Fernando **TISSONE** (Arg) (29) 24.07.86

FORWARDS
9 **CHARLES** (Bra) (31) 04.04.84
20 Duje **COP** (Cro) (25) 01.02.90
10 Ricardo **HORTA** (Por) (21) 15.09.94
16 Hachim **MASTOUR** (Mor) (17) 15.06.98
24 Roque **SANTA CRUZ** (Par) (34) 16.08.81

COACH
Javi **GRACIA** (45) 01.05.70

RAYO VALLECANO

GOALKEEPERS
30 Alex **CAMPOS** (24) 28.06.91
13 Juan **CARLOS** (27) 20.01.88
1 David **COBENO** (33) 06.04.82
25 **YOEL** (27) 28.08.88

DEFENDERS
4 Antonio **AMAYA** (32) 31.05.83
5 Chechu **DORADO** (33) 10.07.82
27 Diego **LLORENTE** (22) 16.08.93
3 **NACHO** (26) 07.03.89
17 **QUINI** (26) 24.09.89
15 Razvan **RAT** (Rom) (34) 26.05.81
2 **TITO** (30) 11.07.85
18 **ZE CASTRO** (Por) (32) 13.01.83

MIDFIELDERS
8 Raul **BAENA** (26) 02.03.89
19 Lass **BANGOURA** (Gui) (23) 30.03.92
6 Ousseynou **CISSE** (Sen) (24) 06.04.91
20 Patrick **EBERT** (Ger) (28) 17.03.87
11 Adri **EMBARBA** (23) 07.05.92
12 Luis **FARINA** (Arg) (24) 20.04.91
14 Pablo **HERNANDEZ** (30) 11.04.85
21 **JOZABED** (24) 08.03.91
10 Roberto **TRASHORRAS** (34) 28.02.81
16 **ZHANG** Chengdong (Chn) (26) 09.02.89

FORWARDS
23 **BEBE** (Por) (25) 12.07.90
24 Javi **GUERRA** (32) 15.03.83
9 **MANUCHO** (Ang) (32) 07.03.83
7 **MIKU** (Ven) (30) 19.08.85

COACH
Paco **JEMEZ** (45) 18.04.70

REAL MADRID

GOALKEEPERS
41 Carlos **ABAD** (22) 06.02.93
13 Kiko **CASILLA** (29) 02.10.86
1 Keylor **NAVAS** (CR) (29) 15.12.86
31 Ruben **YANEZ** (22) 12.10.93

DEFENDERS
30 **ABNER** (Bra) (19) 30.05.96
17 Alvaro **ARBELOA** (32) 17.01.83
15 Daniel **CARVAJAL** (23) 11.01.92
23 **DANILO** (Bra) (24) 15.07.91
32 Philipp **LIENHART** (Aut) (19) 11.07.96
12 **MARCELO** (Bra) (27) 12.05.88
6 **NACHO** (25) 18.01.90
3 **PEPE** (Por) (32) 26.02.83
4 Sergio **RAMOS** (29) 30.03.86
34 Alvaro **TEJERO** (19) 20.07.96
2 Raphael **VARANE** (Fra) (22) 25.04.93

MIDFIELDERS
11 Gareth **BALE** (Wal) (26) 16.07.89
14 **CASEMIRO** (Bra) (23) 23.02.92
21 Denis **CHERYSHEV** (Rus) (25) 26.12.90
22 **ISCO** (23) 21.04.92
16 Mateo **KOVACIC** (Cro) (21) 06.05.94
8 Toni **KROOS** (Ger) (25) 04.01.90
33 Jose Carlos **LAZO** (19) 16.02.96
28 Marcos **LLORENTE** (20) 30.01.95
19 Luka **MODRIC** (Cro) (30) 09.09.85
10 James **RODRIGUEZ** (Col) (24) 12.07.91
18 Lucas **VAZQUEZ** (24) 01.07.91
27 Martin **ODEGAARD** (Nor) (17) 17.12.98

FORWARDS
9 Karim **BENZEMA** (Fra) (28) 19.12.87
20 **JESE** (22) 26.02.93
29 Borja **MAYORAL** (18) 05.04.97
7 Cristiano **RONALDO** (Por) (30) 05.02.85

COACH
Rafa **BENITEZ** (55) 16.04.60

DEP LA CORUNA

GOALKEEPERS
26 David **GOMEZ** (21) 11.04.94
13 **FABRICIO** (27) 31.12.87
1 German **LUX** (Arg) (33) 06.07.82
25 **MANU** (29) 09.03.86

DEFENDERS
14 Alejandro **ARRIBAS** (26) 01.05.89
15 **LAURE** (30) 22.03.85
23 Alberto **LOPO** (35) 05.05.80
16 **LUISINHO** (Por) (30) 05.05.85
3 Fernando **NAVARRO** (33) 25.06.82
2 Manuel **PABLO** (39) 25.01.76
18 **SAUL** Garcia (21) 09.11.94
12 **SIDNEI** (Bra) (26) 23.08.89

MIDFIELDERS
21 Luis **ALBERTO** (23) 28.09.92
4 Alex **BERGANTINOS** (30) 07.06.85
22 Celso **BORGES** (CR) (27) 27.05.88
6 **CANI** (34) 03.08.81
17 Fede **CARTABIA** (Arg) (22) 20.01.93
10 Juan **DOMINGUEZ** (25) 08.01.90
19 Faycal **FAJR** (Mor) (27) 01.08.88
24 Jonas **GUTIERREZ** (Arg) (33) 05.07.82
7 **LUCAS** Perez (27) 10.09.88
8 Haris **MEDUNJANIN** (Bos) (30) 08.03.85
11 **JUANFRAN** Moreno (27) 11.09.88
5 Pedro **MOSQUERA** (27) 21.04.88

FORWARDS
30 Miguel **CARDOSO** (Por) (21) 19.06.94
33 Ben **FISK** (Can) (22) 04.02.93
9 Oriol **RIERA** (29) 03.07.86
20 Jonathan **RODRIGUEZ** (Uru) (22) 06.07.93

COACH
Victor **SANCHEZ** (39) 23.02.76

EIBAR

GOALKEEPERS
1 Xabi **IRURETA** (29) 21.03.86
25 **JAIME** (35) 10.12.80
30 Jorge **MEDIAVILLA** (22) 16.06.93
13 Asier **RIESGO** (32) 06.10.83

DEFENDERS
15 Mauro **DOS SANTOS** (Arg) (26) 07.07.89
23 **BORJA** Ekiza (27) 06.03.88
17 David **JUNCA** (22) 16.11.93
16 **LILLO** (26) 27.03.89
19 Antonio **LUNA** (24) 17.03.91
3 Aleksandar **PANTIC** (Ser) (23) 11.04.92
4 Ivan **RAMIS** (31) 25.10.84

MIDFIELDERS
24 **ADRIAN** (27) 25.05.88
28 Inigo **BARRENETXEA** (21) 10.01.94
7 Ander **CAPA** (23) 14.05.92
5 Gonzalo **ESCALANTE** (Arg) (22) 27.03.93
14 Dani **GARCIA** (25) 24.05.90
11 Izet **HAJROVIC** (Bos) (24) 04.08.91
8 Takashi **INUI** (Jap) (27) 02.06.88
6 Eddy **ISRAFILOV** (Aze) (23) 02.08.92
20 **KEKO** (24) 27.12.91

FORWARDS
10 Mikel **ARRUABARRENA** (32) 09.02.83
9 Sergi **ENRICH** (25) 26.02.90
18 Borja **GONZALEZ** (23) 25.08.92
21 **SAUL** (29) 24.05.86
26 **THAYLOR** (21) 27.02.94
2 Simone **VERDI** (Ita) (23) 12.07.92

COACH
Jose Luis **MENDILIBAR** (54) 04.03.61

ESPANYOL

GOALKEEPERS
1 Francesco **BARDI** (Ita) (23) 18.01.92
13 Pau **LOPEZ** (21) 13.12.94
26 Andres **PRIETO** (22) 17.10.93

DEFENDERS
5 Victor **ALVAREZ** (22) 14.03.93
22 **ALVARO** (25) 08.01.90
23 Anaitz **ARBILLA** (28) 15.05.87
15 Michael **CIANI** (Fra) (31) 06.04.84
3 Ruben **DUARTE** (20) 18.10.95
18 Juan **FUENTES** (25) 05.01.90
29 Cristian **GALAS** (22) 15.02.93
16 Javi **LOPEZ** (29) 21.01.86
27 Lluis **LOPEZ** (18) 05.03.97
31 Marc **NAVARRO** (20) 02.07.95
2 **ROBER** (23) 20.09.92
24 Antonio **RAILLO** (24) 08.10.91
6 Enzo **ROCO** (Chl) (23) 16.08.92

MIDFIELDERS
10 **ABRAHAM** (30) 16.07.85
25 Marco **ASENSIO** (19) 21.01.96
14 Jose **CANAS** (28) 27.05.87
12 Pape **DIOP** (Sen) (29) 19.03.86
19 Joan **JORDAN** (21) 06.07.94
11 Paco **MONTANES** (29) 08.10.86
17 Hernan **PEREZ** (Par) (26) 25.02.89
4 Victor **SANCHEZ** (28) 08.09.87
8 Salva **SEVILLA** (31) 18.03.84

FORWARDS
9 **BURGUI** (22) 29.10.93
20 Felipe **CAICEDO** (Ecu) (27) 05.09.88
30 Adrian **DALMAU** (21) 23.03.94
7 Gerard **MORENO** (23) 07.04.92
32 **RUFO** (22) 13.01.93
28 Mamadou **SYLLA** (Sen) (21) 20.03.94

COACH
(vacant)

GETAFE

GOALKEEPERS
13 Vicente **GUAITA** (28) 18.02.87
1 Balazs **MEGYERI** (Hun) (25) 31.03.90

DEFENDERS
2 **ALEXIS** (30) 04.08.85
6 **CALA** (26) 26.11.89
3 Roberto **LAGO** (30) 30.08.85
27 Javi **NOBLEJAS** (22) 18.03.93
19 Damian **SUAREZ** (Uru) (27) 27.04.88
4 Emiliano **VELAZQUEZ** (Uru) (21) 30.04.94
5 Santiago **VERGINI** (Arg) (27) 03.08.88
15 Carlos **VIGARAY** (21) 07.09.94

MIDFIELDERS
21 Moi **GOMEZ** (21) 23.06.94
8 Mehdi **LACEN** (Alg) (31) 15.03.84
7 Angel **LAFITA** (31) 07.08.84
14 Pedro **LEON** (29) 24.11.86
23 Alvaro **MEDRAN** (21) 15.03.94
17 Bernard **MENSAH** (Gha) (21) 17.10.94
22 Juan **RODRIGUEZ** (33) 01.04.82
10 Pablo **SARABIA** (23) 11.05.92
11 Karim **YODA** (Fra) (27) 25.10.88

FORWARDS
32 Emi **BUENDIA** (Arg) (19) 25.12.96
26 Ian **GONZALEZ** (22) 11.02.93
18 Victor **RODRIGUEZ** (26) 23.07.89
12 Stefan **SCEPOVIC** (Ser) (25) 10.01.90
9 Alvaro **VAZQUEZ** (24) 27.04.91
30 **WAMBERTO** (Bra) (21) 07.10.94

COACH
Fran **ESCRIBA** (50) 03.05.65

GRANADA

GOALKEEPERS
35 Stole **DIMITRIEVSKI** (Mac) (22) 23.12.93
13 Andres **FERNANDEZ** (29) 17.12.86
1 Ivan **KELAVA** (Cro) (27) 20.02.88

DEFENDERS
6 Jean-Sylvain **BABIN** (Mar) (29) 14.10.86
3 Cristiano **BIRAGHI** (Ita) (23) 01.09.92
12 **DORIA** (Bra) (21) 08.11.94
22 Dimitri **FOULQUIER** (Fra) (22) 23.03.93
2 David **LOMBAN** (28) 05.06.87
25 Miguel **LOPES** (Por) (29) 19.12.86
5 Diego **MAINZ** (33) 29.12.82
24 Yrondu **MUSAVU-KING** (Gab) (23) 08.01.92
19 **NEUTON** (Bra) (25) 14.03.90
14 Salva **RUIZ** (20) 17.05.95

MIDFIELDERS
26 Uche **AGBO** (Nga) (20) 04.12.95
17 **EDGAR** (24) 30.04.91
7 Robert **IBANEZ** (22) 22.03.93
29 Nabil **JAADI** (Mor) (19) 01.07.96
21 Rene **KRHIN** (Sln) (25) 21.05.90
8 Javi **MARQUEZ** (29) 11.05.86
20 Ruben **PEREZ** (26) 26.04.89
10 **PITI** (34) 26.05.81
4 Fran **RICO** (28) 03.08.87

FORWARDS
16 Thievy **BIFOUMA** (Con) (23) 13.05.92
9 Youssef **EL ARABI** (Mor) (28) 03.02.87
15 Nicolas **LOPEZ** (Uru) (22) 01.10.93
27 Adalberto **PENARANDA** (Ven) (18) 31.05.97
23 Ruben **ROCHINA** (24) 23.03.91
11 Isaac **SUCCESS** (Nga) (19) 07.01.96

COACH
Jose **RAMON SANDOVAL** (47) 02.05.68

REAL SOCIEDAD

GOALKEEPERS
31 Ander **BARDAJI** (20) 03.05.95
13 Oier **OLAZABAL** (26) 14.09.89
1 Geronimo **RULLI** (Arg) (23) 20.05.92

DEFENDERS
15 Ion **ANSOTEGI** (33) 13.07.82
24 Alberto **DE LA BELLA** (30) 02.12.85
30 Aritz **ELUSTONDO** (21) 11.01.94
3 Mikel **GONZALEZ** (30) 24.09.85
21 Hector **HERNANDEZ** (24) 23.05.91
2 Carlos **MARTINEZ** (29) 09.04.86
6 Inigo **MARTINEZ** (24) 17.05.91
25 Raul **NAVAS** (27) 11.05.88
23 Diego **REYES** (Mex) (23) 19.09.92
19 **YURI** (25) 10.02.90
20 Joseba **ZALDUA** (23) 24.06.92

MIDFIELDERS
5 Markel **BERGARA** (29) 05.05.86
16 Sergio **CANALES** (24) 16.02.91
8 Esteban **GRANERO** (28) 02.07.87
4 Asier **ILLARRAMENDI** (25) 08.03.90
28 Mikel **OIARZABAL** (18) 21.04.97
12 Alain **OYARZUN** (22) 27.09.93
14 Ruben **PARDO** (23) 22.10.92
10 Xabi **PRIETO** (32) 29.08.83
17 David **ZURUTUZA** (29) 19.07.86

FORWARDS
9 Imanol **AGIRRETXE** (28) 24.02.87
7 **BRUMA** (Por) (21) 24.10.94
18 Gonzalo **CASTRO** (Uru) (31) 14.09.84
22 JONATHAS **(BRA)** (26) 06.03.89
11 Carlos **VELA** (Mex) (26) 01.03.89

COACH
Eusebio **SACRISTAN** (51) 13.04.64

SEVILLA

GOALKEEPERS
13 **BETO** (Por) (33) 01.05.82
1 Sergio **RICO** (22) 01.09.93
31 David **SORIA** (22) 04.04.93

DEFENDERS
17 Marco **ANDREOLLI** (Ita) (29) 10.06.86
26 David **CARMONA** (18) 11.01.97
23 **COKE** (28) 26.04.87
18 Sergio **ESCUDERO** (26) 02.09.89
34 Diego **GONZALEZ** (20) 28.01.95
5 Timothee **KOLODZIEJCZAK** (Fra) (24) 01.10.91
25 **MARIANO** (Bra) (29) 23.06.86
29 Jose **MATOS** (20) 06.05.95
21 Nicolas **PAREJA** (Arg) (31) 19.01.84
3 Adil **RAMI** (Fra) (30) 27.12.85
2 Benoit **TREMOULINAS** (Fra) (30) 28.12.85

MIDFIELDERS
19 Ever **BANEGA** (Arg) (27) 29.06.88
6 Daniel **CARRICO** (Por) (27) 04.08.88
27 Antonio **COTAN** (20) 19.09.95
14 Sebastian **CRISTOFORO** (Uru) (22) 23.08.93
8 Vicente **IBORRA** (27) 16.01.88
37 **IVI** (21) 29.06.94
12 Gael **KAKUTA** (Fra) (24) 21.06.91
22 Yevhen **KONOPLYANKA** (Ukr) (26) 29.09.89
7 Michael **KROHN-DEHLI** (Den) (32) 06.06.83
4 Grzegorz **KRYCHOWIAK** (Pol) (25) 29.01.90
16 **LUISMI** (23) 05.05.92
15 Steven **N'ZONZI** (Fra) (27) 15.12.88
36 Curro **SANCHEZ** (19) 03.01.96
20 **VITOLO** (26) 02.11.89

FORWARDS
28 Carlos **FERNANDEZ** (19) 25.05.96
9 Kevin **GAMEIRO** (Fra) (28) 09.04.87
11 Ciro **IMMOBILE** (Ita) (25) 20.02.90
24 Fernando **LLORENTE** (30) 26.02.85
30 Juan **MUNOZ** (20) 12.11.95
10 Jose **ANTONIO REYES** (32) 01.09.83

COACH
Unai **EMERY** (44) 03.11.71

SPORTING GIJON

GOALKEEPERS
13 **ALBERTO** (30) 09.02.85
1 Ivan **CUELLAR** (31) 25.05.84
26 Dennis **DIAZ** (23) 08.08.92

DEFENDERS
15 Roberto **CANELLA** (27) 07.02.88
5 Bernardo **ESPINOSA** (Col) (26) 11.07.89
30 Alberto **GONZALEZ** (22) 14.03.93
2 Luis **HERNANDEZ** (26) 14.04.89
11 Alberto **LORA** (28) 25.03.87
3 Alex **MENENDEZ** (24) 15.07.91
28 Jorge **MERE** (18) 17.04.97
29 Julio **RODRIGUEZ** (19) 07.12.95

MIDFIELDERS
24 Rachid **AIT-ATMANE** (Alg) (22) 04.02.93
6 Sergio **ALVAREZ** (23) 23.01.92
8 Alex **BARRERA** (24) 12.05.91
10 Nacho **CASES** (28) 22.12.87
14 Alberto **GUITIAN** (25) 29.07.90
25 Alen **HALILOVIC** (Cro) (19) 18.06.96
18 Isma **LOPEZ** (25) 29.01.90
17 Omar **MASCARELL** (22) 02.02.93
7 Juan **MUNIZ** (23) 13.03.92
33 Dani **NDI** (Cam) (20) 18.08.95
22 Pablo **PEREZ** (22) 02.08.93

FORWARDS
19 Carlos **CARMONA** (28) 05.07.87
16 Carlos **CASTRO** (20) 01.06.95
21 Hugo **FRAILE** (28) 16.03.87
9 Miguel Angel **GUERRERO** (25) 12.07.90
23 **JONY** (24) 09.07.91
27 **MENDI** (22) 12.06.93
20 Antonio **SANABRIA** (Par) (19) 04.03.96

COACH
ABELARDO (45) 19.04.70

VALENCIA

GOALKEEPERS
1 Diego **ALVES** (Bra) (30) 24.06.85
24 Jaume **DOMENECH** (25) 05.11.90
25 Matthew **RYAN** (Aus) (23) 08.04.92

DEFENDERS
23 Aymen **ABDENNOUR** (Tun) (26) 06.08.89
19 Antonio **BARRAGAN** (28) 12.06.87
2 Joao **CANCELO** (Por) (21) 27.05.94
31 Ibrahim **DIALLO** (Mli) (19) 12.08.96
14 Jose Luis **GAYA** (20) 25.05.95
5 Shkodran **MUSTAFI** (Ger) (23) 17.04.92
6 Lucas **ORBAN** (Arg) (26) 03.02.89
4 Aderlan **SANTOS** (Bra) (26) 09.04.89
3 Ruben **VEZO** (Por) (21) 25.04.94

MIDFIELDERS
12 **DANILO** (Bra) (19) 28.02.96
20 Rodrigo **DE PAUL** (Arg) (21) 24.05.94
8 Sofiane **FEGHOULI** (Alg) (26) 26.12.89
18 Javi **FUEGO** (31) 04.01.84
21 Andre **GOMES** (Por) (22) 30.07.93
10 Dani **PAREJO** (26) 16.04.89
15 Enzo **PEREZ** (Arg) (29) 22.02.86
11 Pablo **PIATTI** (Arg) (26) 31.03.89
28 **TROPI** (20) 12.05.95
30 Fran **VILLALBA** (17) 11.05.98

FORWARDS
9 Paco **ALCACER** (22) 30.08.93
16 Zakaria **BAKKALI** (Blg) (19) 26.01.96
22 Santi **MINA** (20) 07.12.95
27 Rafa **MIR** (18) 18.06.97
7 Alvaro **NEGREDO** (30) 20.08.85
17 **RODRIGO** (24) 06.03.91

COACH
Gary **NEVILLE** (Eng) (40) 18.02.75

VILLARREAL

GOALKEEPERS
13 Alphonse **AREOLA** (Fra) (22) 27.02.93
1 Sergio **ASENJO** (26) 28.06.89
25 Mariano **BARBOSA** (Arg) (31) 27.07.84

DEFENDERS
24 Eric **BAILLY** (IvC) (21) 12.04.94
23 Daniele **BONERA** (34) 31.05.81
44 Pablo **INIGUEZ** (21) 20.01.94
11 **JAUME** (27) 18.03.88
3 Bojan **JOKIC** (Sln) (29) 17.05.86
27 Adrian **MARIN** (18) 09.01.97
2 **MARIO** (25) 24.11.90
5 Mateo **MUSACCHIO** (Arg) (25) 26.08.90
6 Victor **RUIZ** (26) 25.01.89
22 Antonio **RUKAVINA** (Ser) (31) 26.01.84

MIDFIELDERS
21 **BRUNO** (31) 12.06.84
8 Jonathan **DOS SANTOS** (Mex) (25) 26.04.90
28 Alfonso **PEDRAZA** (19) 09.04.96
4 Tomas **PINA** (28) 14.10.87
18 Denis **SUAREZ** (21) 06.01.94
14 Manu **TRIGUEROS** (24) 17.10.91

FORWARDS
20 **ADRIAN** (27) 08.01.88
17 Cedric **BAKAMBU** (Fra) (24) 11.04.91
10 Leo **BAPTISTAO** (Bra) (23) 26.08.92
19 Samu **CASTILLEJO** (20) 18.01.95
26 Nahuel **LEIVA** (19) 22.10.96
7 **SAMU** (25) 13.07.90
9 Roberto **SOLDADO** (30) 27.05.85

COACH
MARCELINO (50) 14.08.65

(Ages as of 30.12.15)

SERIE A

ATALANTA

GOALKEEPERS
30 Davide **BASSI** (30) 12.04.85
1 Boris **RADUNOVIC** (Ser) (19) 26.05.96
57 Marco **SPORTIELLO** (23) 10.05.92

DEFENDERS
6 Gianpaolo **BELLINI** (35) 27.03.80
28 Davide **BRIVIO** (27) 17.03.88
33 Nicolo **CHERUBIN** (29) 02.12.86
24 Andrea **CONTI** (21) 02.03.94
93 Boukary **DRAME** (Sen) (30) 22.07.85
44 Anton **KRESIC** (Cro) (19) 29.01.96
5 Andrea **MASIELLO** (29) 05.02.86
29 Gabriel **PALETTA** (29) 15.02.86
2 Guglielmo **STENDARDO** (34) 06.05.81
23 Emanuele **SUAGHER** (23) 26.11.92
3 Rafael **TOLOI** (Bra) (25) 10.10.90

MIDFIELDERS
17 Carlos **CARMONA** (Chl) (28) 21.02.87
21 Luca **CIGARINI** (29) 20.06.86
7 Marco **D'ALESSANDRO** (24) 17.02.91
15 Marten **DE ROON** (Hol) (24) 29.03.91
20 Marcelo **ESTIGARRIBIA** (Par) (28) 21.09.87
98 Matteo **GASPERONI** (17) 11.09.98
10 Alejandro **GOMEZ** (Arg) (27) 15.02.88
88 Alberto **GRASSI** (20) 07.03.95
27 Jasmin **KURTIC** (Sln) (26) 10.01.89
8 Giulio **MIGLIACCIO** (34) 23.06.81
11 Maximiliano **MORALEZ** (Arg) (28) 27.02.87
77 Cristian **RAIMONDI** (34) 30.04.81
97 Tiziano **TULISSI** (18) 21.07.97

FORWARDS
19 German **DENIS** (Arg) (34) 10.09.81
45 Gaetano **MONACHELLO** (21) 03.03.94
51 Mauricio **PINILLA** (Chl) (31) 04.02.84

COACH
Edy **REJA** (70) 10.10.45

BOLOGNA

GOALKEEPERS
1 Angelo **DA COSTA** (Bra) (32) 12.11.83
83 Antonio **MIRANTE** (32) 08.07.83
32 Dejan **STOJANOVIC** (Mac) (22) 19.07.93

DEFENDERS
77 Luca **CECCARELLI** (32) 24.03.83
24 Alex **FERRARI** (21) 01.07.94
28 Daniele **GASTALDELLO** (32) 25.06.83
4 Emil **KRAFTH** (Swe) (21) 02.08.94
20 Domenico **MAIETTA** (33) 03.08.82
25 Adam **MASINA** (Mor) (21) 02.01.94
15 Ibrahima **MBAYE** (Sen) (21) 19.11.94
3 Archimede **MORLEO** (32) 26.09.83
2 Marios **OIKONOMOU** (Gre) (23) 06.10.92
13 Luca **ROSSETTINI** (30) 09.05.85

MIDFIELDERS
33 Matteo **BRIGHI** (34) 14.02.81
90 Marco **CRIMI** (25) 17.03.90
6 Lorenzo **CRISETIG** (22) 20.01.93
21 Amadou **DIAWARA** (Gui) (18) 17.07.97
30 Godfred **DONSAH** (Gha) (19) 07.06.96
17 Emanuele **GIACCHERINI** (30) 05.05.85
16 Marko **KRIVICIC** (Sln) (19) 01.02.96
5 Erick **PULGAR** (Chl) (21) 15.01.94
22 Luca **RIZZO** (23) 24.04.92
8 Saphir **TAIDER** (Alg) (23) 29.02.92
14 Franco **ZUCULINI** (Arg) (25) 05.09.90

FORWARDS
23 Franco **BRIENZA** (36) 19.03.79
7 Filippo **FALCO** (23) 11.02.92
10 Mattia **DESTRO** (24) 20.03.91
11 Matteo **MANCOSU** (31) 22.12.84
18 Robert **ACQUAFRESCA** (28) 11.09.87
26 Anthony **MOUNIER** (Fra) (28) 27.09.87

COACH
Roberto **DONADONI** (52) 09.09.63

CARPI

GOALKEEPERS
27 Vid **BELEC** (Sln) (25) 06.06.90
22 Francesco **BENUSSI** (34) 15.10.81
1 Zeljko **BRKIC** (Ser) (29) 09.07.86
97 Andrea **LIOTTI** (18) 20.02.97

DEFENDERS
18 Igor **BUBNJIC** (Cro) (23) 17.07.92
6 Riccardo **GAGLIOLO** (25) 28.04.90
3 Gaetano **LETIZIA** (25) 29.06.90
21 Simone **ROMAGNOLI** (25) 09.02.90
34 Gabriel **SILVA** (Bra) (24) 13.05.91
33 Nicolas **SPOLLI** (Arg) (32) 20.02.83
2 **WALLACE** (Bra) (21) 01.05.94
5 Cristian **ZACCARDO** (34) 21.12.81

MIDFIELDERS
8 Raffaele **BIANCO** (28) 25.08.87
4 Isaac **COFIE** (Gha) (24) 20.09.91
11 Antonio **DI GAUDIO** (26) 16.08.89
58 Matteo **FEDELE** (Swi) (23) 20.07.92
14 Federico **GINO** (Uru) (22) 26.02.93
94 Gaspar **INIGUEZ** (Arg) (21) 28.03.94
10 Andrea **LAZZARI** (31) 03.12.84
20 Lorenzo **LOLLO** (25) 02.12.90
39 Luca **MARRONE** (25) 28.03.90
29 Raphael **MARTINHO** (Bra) (27) 15.04.88
19 Lorenzo **PASCIUTI** (26) 24.09.89

FORWARDS
12 Marco **BORRIELLO** (33) 18.06.82
15 Kevin **LASAGNA** (23) 10.08.92
7 Ryder **MATOS** (Bra) (22) 27.02.93
99 Jerry **MBAKOGU** (Nga) (23) 01.10.92
9 Kamil **WILCZEK** (Pol) (27) 14.01.88

COACH
Fabrizio **CASTORI** (61) 11.07.54

CHIEVO

GOALKEEPERS
1 Albano **BIZZARRI** (Arg) (38) 09.11.77
32 Walter **BRESSAN** (34) 26.01.81
90 Andrea **SECULIN** (25) 14.07.90

DEFENDERS
29 Fabrizio **CACCIATORE** (29) 08.10.86
12 Bostjan **CESAR** (Sln) (33) 09.07.82
3 Dario **DAINELLI** (36) 09.06.79
21 Nicolas **FREY** (Fra) (31) 06.03.84
5 Alessandro **GAMBERINI** (34) 27.08.81
18 Massimo **GOBBI** (35) 31.10.80
11 Federico **MATTIELLO** (20) 14.07.95
20 Gennaro **SARDO** (36) 08.05.79

MIDFIELDERS
23 Valter **BIRSA** (Sln) (29) 07.08.86
19 Lucas **CASTRO** (Arg) (26) 09.04.89
10 Anders **CHRISTIANSEN** (Den) (25) 08.06.90
96 Filippo **DAMIAN** (19) 21.04.96
56 Perparim **HETEMAJ** (Fin) (29) 12.12.86
13 Mariano **IZCO** (Arg) (32) 13.03.83
7 Simone **PEPE** (32) 30.08.83
6 Giampiero **PINZI** (34) 11.03.81
8 Ivan **RADOVANOVIC** (Ser) (27) 29.08.88
4 Nicola **RIGONI** (25) 12.11.90

FORWARDS
45 Roberto **INGLESE** (24) 12.11.91
69 Riccardo **MEGGIORINI** (30) 04.09.85
40 Paul-Jose **M'POKU** (DRC) (23) 19.04.92
43 Alberto **PALOSCHI** (25) 04.01.90
31 Sergio **PELLISSIER** (36) 12.04.79

COACH
Rolando **MARAN** (52) 14.07.63

EMPOLI

GOALKEEPERS
23 Alberto **PELAGOTTI** (26) 09.03.89
1 Maurizio **PUGLIESI** (39) 21.12.76
28 Lukasz **SKORUPSKI** (Pol) (24) 05.05.91

DEFENDERS
19 Federico **BARBA** (22) 01.09.93
6 Luca **BITTANTE** (22) 14.08.93
31 Michele **CAMPORESE** (23) 19.05.92
24 Uros **COSIC** (Ser) (23) 24.10.92
15 Andrea **COSTA** (29) 01.02.86
4 Kastriot **DERMAKU** (Alb) (23) 15.01.92
2 Vincent **LAURINI** (Fra) (26) 10.06.89
21 Mario **RUI** (Por) (24) 27.05.91
26 Lorenzo **TONELLI** (25) 17.01.90
3 Marco **ZAMBELLI** (30) 22.08.85

MIDFIELDERS
77 Marcel **BUCHEL** (Lie) (24) 18.03.91
11 Daniele **CROCE** (33) 09.09.82
14 Assane **DIOUSSE** (Sen) (18) 20.09.97
33 Rade **KRUNIC** (Bos) (22) 07.10.93
13 Raffaele **MAIELLO** (24) 10.07.91
32 Leandro **PAREDES** (Arg) (21) 29.06.94
12 **RONALDO** (Bra) (25) 08.04.90
5 Riccardo **SAPONARA** (24) 21.12.91
17 Piotr **ZIELINSKI** (Pol) (21) 20.05.94

FORWARDS
39 Marko **LIVAJA** (Cro) (22) 26.08.93
7 Massimo **MACCARONE** (36) 06.09.79
9 Levan **MCHEDLIDZE** (Geo) (25) 24.03.90
22 Alessandro **PIU** (19) 30.07.96
20 Manuel **PUCCIARELLI** (24) 17.06.91

COACH
Marco **GIAMPAOLO** (48) 02.08.67

LAZIO

GOALKEEPERS
99 Etrit **BERISHA** (Alb) (26) 10.03.89
55 Guido **GUERRIERI** (19) 25.02.96
22 Federico **MARCHETTI** (32) 07.02.83

DEFENDERS
8 Dusan **BASTA** (Ser) (31) 18.08.84
5 Edson **BRAAFHEID** (Hol) (32) 08.04.83
3 Stefan **DE VRIJ** (Hol) (23) 05.02.92
18 Santiago **GENTILETTI** (Arg) (30) 09.01.85
2 Wesley **HOEDT** (Hol) (21) 06.03.94
29 Abdoulay **KONKO** (Fra) (31) 09.03.84
33 **MAURICIO** (Bra) (27) 20.09.88
44 Franjo **PRCE** (Cro) (19) 07.01.96
26 Stefan **RADU** (Rom) (29) 22.10.86

MIDFIELDERS
10 Felipe **ANDERSON** (Bra) (22) 15.04.93
20 Lucas **BIGLIA** (Arg) (29) 30.01.86
87 Antonio **CANDREVA** (28) 28.02.87
32 Danilo **CATALDI** (21) 06.08.94
19 Senad **LULIC** (Bos) (29) 18.01.86
6 Stefano **MAURI** (35) 08.01.80
21 Sergej **MILINKOVIC-SAVIC** (Ser) (20) 27.02.95
7 Ravel **MORRISON** (Eng) (22) 02.02.93
96 Alessandro **MURGIA** (19) 09.08.96
70 Christopher **OIKONOMIDIS** (Aus) (20) 04.05.95
23 Ogenyi **ONAZI** (Nga) (23) 25.12.92
16 Marco **PAROLO** (30) 25.01.85
4 **PATRIC** (Spa) (22) 17.04.93

FORWARDS
9 Filip **DJORDJEVIC** (Ser) (28) 28.09.87
14 **KEITA** (Sen) (20) 08.03.95
88 Ricardo **KISHNA** (Hol) (20) 04.01.95
11 Miroslav **KLOSE** (Ger) (37) 09.06.78
17 Alessandro **MATRI** (31) 19.08.84

COACH
Stefano **PIOLI** (50) 20.01.65

MILAN

GOALKEEPERS
32 Christian **ABBIATI** (38) 08.07.77
99 Gianluigi **DONNARUMMA** (16) 25.02.99
97 Alessandro **LIVIERI** (18) 21.01.97
1 Diego **LOPEZ** (Spa) (34) 03.11.81

DEFENDERS
20 Ignazio **ABATE** (29) 12.11.86
33 **ALEX** (Bra) (33) 17.06.82
31 Luca **ANTONELLI** (28) 11.02.87
96 Davide **CALABRIA** (19) 06.12.96
2 Mattia **DE SCIGLIO** (23) 20.10.92
15 Rodrigo **ELY** (Bra) (22) 03.11.93
5 Philippe **MEXES** (Fra) (33) 30.03.82
13 Alessio **ROMAGNOLI** (20) 12.01.95
17 Cristian **ZAPATA** (Col) (29) 30.09.86

MIDFIELDERS
91 Andrea **BERTOLACCI** (24) 11.01.91
28 Giacomo **BONAVENTURA** (26) 22.08.89
34 Nigel **DE JONG** (Hol) (31) 30.11.84
10 Keisuke **HONDA** (Jap) (29) 13.06.86
27 Juraj **KUCKA** (Slk) (28) 26.02.87
4 Jose **MAURI** (19) 16.05.96
18 Riccardo **MONTOLIVO** (30) 18.01.85
23 Antonio **NOCERINO** (30) 09.04.85
16 Andrea **POLI** (26) 29.09.89
8 **SUSO** (Spa) (22) 19.11.93

FORWARDS
9 Luiz **ADRIANO** (Bra) (28) 12.04.87
70 Carlos **BACCA** (Col) (29) 08.09.86
45 Mario **BALOTELLI** (25) 12.08.90
11 Alessio **CERCI** (28) 23.07.87
56 Sebastian **GAMARRA** (Bol) (18) 15.01.97
7 Jeremy **MENEZ** (Fra) (28) 07.05.87
19 Mbaye **NIANG** (Fra) (21) 19.12.94

COACH
Sinisa **MIHAJLOVIC** (Ser) (46) 20.02.69

NAPOLI

GOALKEEPERS
22 **GABRIEL** (Bra) (23) 27.09.92
1 **RAFAEL** (Bra) (25) 20.05.90
25 Pepe **REINA** (Spa) (33) 31.08.82

DEFENDERS
33 Raul **ALBIOL** (Spa) (30) 04.09.85
94 Nathaniel **CHALOBAH** (Eng) (21) 12.12.94
21 Vlad **CHIRICHES** (Rom) (26) 14.11.89
31 Faouzi **GHOULAM** (Alg) (24) 01.02.91
4 **HENRIQUE** (Bra) (29) 14.10.86
2 Elseid **HYSAJ** (Alb) (21) 02.02.94
26 Kalidou **KOULIBALY** (Fra) (24) 20.06.91
96 Sebastiano **LUPERTO** (19) 06.09.96
3 Ivan **STRINIC** (Cro) (28) 17.07.87

MIDFIELDERS
5 **ALLAN** (Bra) (24) 08.01.91
20 Jacopo **DEZI** (23) 10.02.92
16 Jonathan **DE GUZMAN** (Hol) (28) 13.09.87
77 Omar **EL KADDOURI** (Blg) (25) 21.08.90
17 Marek **HAMSIK** (Slk) (28) 27.07.87
8 **JORGINHO** (24) 21.12.91
19 David **LOPEZ** (Spa) (26) 09.10.89
11 Cristian **MAGGIO** (33) 11.02.82
6 Mirko **VALDIFIORI** (29) 21.04.86
18 Camilo **ZUNIGA** (Col) (30) 14.12.85

FORWARDS
7 Jose **CALLEJON** (Spa) (28) 11.02.87
23 Manolo **GABBIADINI** (24) 26.11.91
9 Gonzalo **HIGUAIN** (Arg) (28) 10.12.87
24 Lorenzo **INSIGNE** (24) 04.06.91
14 Dries **MERTENS** (Blg) (28) 06.05.87

COACH
Maurizio **SARRI** (56) 10.01.59

PALERMO

GOALKEEPERS
53 Fabrizio **ALASTRA** (18) 01.10.97
70 Stefano **SORRENTINO** (36) 28.03.79
91 Simone **COLOMBI** (24) 01.07.91

DEFENDERS
2 Roberto **VITIELLO** (32) 08.05.83
3 Andrea **RISPOLI** (27) 29.09.88
4 Sinisa **ANDJELKOVIC** (Sln) (29) 13.02.86
6 Edoardo **GOLDANIGA** (22) 02.11.93
7 Achraf **LAZAAR** (Mot) (23) 22.01.92
12 Giancarlo **GONZALEZ** (CR) (27) 08.02.88
23 Aljaz **STRUNA** (Sln) (25) 04.08.90
31 Roberto **PIRRELLO** (19) 30.05.96
33 Fabio **DAPRELA** (Swi) (24) 19.02.91
34 Abdelhamid **EL KAOUTARI** (Mor) (25) 17.03.90
77 Michel **MORGANELLA** (Swi) (26) 17.05.89
97 Giuseppe **PEZZELLA** (18) 29.11.97

MIDFIELDERS
5 Francesco **BOLZONI** (26) 07.05.89
10 Oscar **HILJEMARK** (Swe) (23) 28.06.92
16 Gaston **BRUGMAN** (Uru) (23) 07.09.92
18 Ivaylo **CHOCHEV** (Bul) (22) 18.02.93
20 Franco **VAZQUEZ** (26) 22.02.89
21 Robin **QUAISON** (Swe) (22) 09.10.93
25 Enzo **MARESCA** (35) 10.02.80
27 Luca **RIGONI** (31) 07.12.84
28 Mato **JAJALO** (Cro) (27) 25.05.88
56 Housem **FERCHICHI** (19) 26.03.96

FORWARDS
9 Matheus **CASSINI** (Bra) (19) 15.02.96
11 Alberto **GILARDINO** (33) 05.07.82
54 Antonino **LA GUMINA** (19) 06.03.96
99 Uros **DJURDJEVIC** (Ser) (21) 02.03.94
8 Aleksandar **TRAJKOVSKI** (Mac) (23) 05.09.92

COACH
Davide **BALLARDINI** (51) 06.01.64

ROMA

GOALKEEPERS
26 Morgan **DE SANCTIS** (38) 26.03.77
1 Bogdan **LOBONT** (Rom) (37) 18.01.78
59 Ionut **POP** (Rom) (18) 01.08.97
25 Wojciech **SZCZESNY** (Pol) (25) 18.04.90

DEFENDERS
99 Nura **ABDULLAHI** (Nga) (18) 17.08.97
51 Silvio **ANOCIC** (Cro) (18) 10.09.97
95 Elio **CAPRADOSSI** (19) 11.03.96
5 Leandro **CASTAN** (Bra) (29) 05.11.86
3 Lucas **DIGNE** (Fra) (22) 20.07.93
33 **EMERSON** (Bra) (21) 03.08.94
23 Norbert **GYOMBER** (Slk) (23) 03.07.92
13 **MAICON** (Bra) (34) 26.07.81
44 Konstantinos **MANOLAS** (Gre) (24) 14.06.91
2 Antonio **RUDIGER** (Ger) (22) 03.03.93
35 Vasilis **TOROSIDIS** (Gre) (30) 10.06.85

MIDFIELDERS
16 Daniele **DE ROSSI** (32) 24.07.83
52 Lorenzo **DI LIVIO** (18) 11.01.97
53 Christian **D'URSO** (18) 26.07.97
24 Alessandro **FLORENZI** (24) 11.03.91
20 Seydou **KEITA** (Mli) (35) 16.01.80
4 Radja **NAINGGOLAN** (Blg) (27) 04.05.88
57 **PEPIN** (EqG) (19) 14.08.96
15 Miralem **PJANIC** (Bos) (25) 02.04.90
11 Mohamed **SALAH** (Egy) (23) 15.06.92
6 Kevin **STROOTMAN** (Hol) (25) 13.02.90
48 Salih **UCAN** (Tur) (21) 06.01.94
21 William **VAINQUEUR** (Fra) (27) 19.11.88

FORWARDS
9 Edin **DZEKO** (Bos) (29) 17.03.86
14 Iago **FALQUE** (Spa) (25) 04.01.90
27 **GERVINHO** (IvC) (28) 27.05.87
7 Juan Manuel **ITURBE** (Arg) (22) 04.06.93
18 Ezequiel **PONCE** (Arg) (18) 29.03.97
92 Edoardo **SOLERI** (18) 19.10.97
10 Francesco **TOTTI** (39) 27.09.76
93 Marco **TUMMINELLO** (17) 06.11.98
97 Sadiq **UMAR** (Nga) (18) 02.02.97

COACH
Rudi **GARCIA** (Fra) (51) 20.02.64

FIORENTINA

GOALKEEPERS
24 Luca **LEZZERINI** (20) 24.03.95
33 Luigi **SEPE** (24) 08.05.91
12 Ciprian **TATARUSANU** (Rom) (29) 09.02.86

DEFENDERS
28 Marcos **ALONSO** (Spa) (25) 28.12.90
13 Davide **ASTORI** (28) 07.01.87
15 Ricardo **BAGADUR** (Cro) (20) 16.09.95
3 **GILBERTO** (Bra) (22) 07.03.93
23 Manuel **PASQUAL** (33) 13.03.82
2 Gonzalo **RODRIGUEZ** (Arg) (31) 10.04.84
32 Facundo **RONCAGLIA** (Arg) (28) 10.02.87
4 Nenad **TOMOVIC** (Ser) (28) 30.08.87

MIDFIELDERS
27 Marko **BAKIC** (Mne) (22) 01.11.93
5 Milan **BADELJ** (Cro) (26) 25.02.89
16 Jakub **BLASZCZYKOWSKI** (Pol) (30) 14.12.85
98 Abdou **DIAKHATE** (Sen) (16) 31.12.98
14 Matias **FERNANDEZ** (Chl) (29) 15.05.86
77 Oleksandr **IAKOVENKO** (Ukr) (28) 23.06.87
72 Josip **ILICIC** (Sln) (27) 29.01.88
18 Mario **SUAREZ** (Spa) (28) 24.02.87
20 Borja **VALERO** (Spa) (30) 12.01.85
8 Matias **VECINO** (Uru) (24) 24.08.91
21 Joan **VERDU** (Spa) (32) 05.05.83

FORWARDS
30 Khouma **BABACAR** (Sen) (22) 17.03.93
90 Jaime **BAEZ** (Uru) (20) 24.04.95
10 Federico **BERNARDESCHI** (21) 16.02.94
9 Nikola **KALINIC** (Cro) (27) 05.01.88
11 Ante **REBIC** (Cro) (22) 21.09.93
22 Giuseppe **ROSSI** (28) 01.02.87

COACH
Paulo **SOUSA** (Por) (45) 30.08.70

FROSINONE

GOALKEEPERS
23 Lys **GOMIS** (Sen) (26) 06.10.89
33 Nicola **LEALI** (22) 17.02.93
1 Massimo **ZAPPINO** (Bra) (34) 12.06.81

DEFENDERS
93 Arlind **AJETI** (Alb) (22) 25.09.93
69 Davide **BERTONCINI** (24) 09.05.91
6 Leonardo **BLANCHARD** (27) 06.05.88
13 Matteo **CIOFANI** (27) 26.02.88
3 Roberto **CRIVELLO** (24) 14.09.91
24 Modibo **DIAKITE** (Fra) (28) 02.03.87
20 Daniel **PAVLOVIC** (Swi) (27) 22.04.88
28 Aleandro **ROSI** (28) 17.05.87
4 Adriano **RUSSO** (28) 06.06.87

MIDFIELDERS
29 Massimiliano **CARLINI** (29) 20.08.86
22 Yussif Raman **CHIBSAH** (Gha) (22) 10.03.93
7 Alessandro **FRARA** (33) 07.11.82
5 Mirko **GORI** (22) 04.02.93
8 Robert **GUCHER** (Aut) (24) 20.02.91
21 Paolo **SAMMARCO** (32) 17.03.83
10 Danilo **SODDIMO** (28) 27.09.87
19 Aleksander **TONEV** (Bul) (25) 03.02.90

FORWARDS
30 Nicolas **CASTILLO** (Chl) (22) 14.02.93
9 Daniel **CIOFANI** (30) 31.07.85
18 Federico **DIONISI** (28) 16.06.87
12 Samuele **LONGO** (23) 12.01.92
17 Luca **PAGANINI** (22) 08.06.93
11 Daniele **VERDE** (19) 20.06.96

COACH
Roberto **STELLONE** (38) 22.07.77

GENOA

GOALKEEPERS
32 Antonio **DONNARUMMA** (25) 07.07.90
23 Eugenio **LAMANNA** (26) 07.08.89
1 Mattia **PERIN** (23) 10.11.92
39 Daniele **SOMMARIVA** (18) 18.07.97
27 Samir **UJKANI** (Alb) (27) 05.07.88

DEFENDERS
3 Cristian **ANSALDI** (Arg) (29) 20.09.86
8 Nicolas **BURDISSO** (Arg) (34) 12.04.81
90 Issa **CISSOKHO** (Sen) (30) 23.02.85
36 Samuel **DELLI CARRI** (Swi) (18) 26.11.97
4 Sebastian **DE MAIO** (Fra) (28) 05.03.87
41 Mario **IERARDI** (17) 19.02.98
11 Diogo **FIGUEIRAS** (Bra) (24) 01.07.91
5 Armando **IZZO** (23) 02.03.92
15 Giovanni **MARCHESE** (31) 17.10.84
24 Ezequiel **MUNOZ** (Arg) (25) 08.10.90
34 Paolo **PARENTE** (18) 08.03.97
54 Sandro **SAKHO** (Por) (19) 01.05.96
2 Alassane **TAMBE** (Fra) (23) 26.01.92

MIDFIELDERS
16 Diego **CAPEL** (Spa) (27) 16.02.88
40 Mattia **CELLA** (19) 02.01.96
20 Tino **COSTA** (Arg) (30) 09.01.85
31 Blerim **DZEMAILI** (Swi) (29) 12.04.86
87 Andrea **GULLI** (18) 09.11.97
93 Diego **LAXALT** (Uru) (22) 07.02.93
22 Darko **LAZOVIC** (Ser) (25) 15.09.90
18 Olivier **NTCHAM** (Fra) (19) 09.02.96
38 Simone **RICOZZI** (18) 24.03.97
88 Tomas **RINCON** (Ven) (27) 13.01.88
77 Panagiotis **TACHTSIDIS** (Gre) (24) 15.02.91

FORWARDS
98 Raul **ASENCIO** (Spa) (17) 20.05.98
13 Serge **GAKPE** (Tog) (28) 07.05.87
97 Paolo **GHIGLIONE** (18) 02.02.97
21 Goran **PANDEV** (Mac) (32) 27.07.83
37 Giuseppe **PANICO** (18) 10.05.97
19 Leonardo **PAVOLETTI** (27) 26.11.88
10 Diego **PEROTTI** (Arg) (27) 26.07.88

COACH
Gian Piero **GASPERINI** (57) 26.01.58

INTERNAZIONALE

GOALKEEPERS
46 Tommaso **BERNI** (32) 06.03.83
30 Juan Pablo **CARRIZO** (Arg) (31) 06.05.84
1 Samir **HANDANOVIC** (Sln) (31) 14.07.84
98 Ionut **RADU** (Rom) (18) 28.05.97

DEFENDERS
33 Danilo **D'AMBROSIO** (27) 09.09.88
93 Federico **DIMARCO** (18) 10.11.97
5 **JUAN** (Bra) (24) 10.06.91
25 **MIRANDA** (Bra) (31) 07.09.84
14 Martin **MONTOYA** (Spa) (24) 14.04.91
24 Jeison **MURILLO** (Col) (23) 27.05.92
55 Yuto **NAGATOMO** (Jap) (29) 12.09.86
56 Razvan **POPA** (Rom) (18) 04.01.97
23 Andrea **RANOCCHIA** (27) 16.02.88
21 Davide **SANTON** (24) 02.01.91
12 Alex **TELLES** (Bra) (23) 15.12.92
15 Nemanja **VIDIC** (Ser) (34) 21.10.81

MIDFIELDERS
92 Enrico **BALDINI** (19) 13.11.96
77 Marcelo **BROZOVIC** (Cro) (23) 16.11.92
13 Fredy **GUARIN** (Col) (29) 30.06.86
27 Assane **GNOUKOURI** (IvC) (19) 28.09.96
7 Geoffrey **KONDOGBIA** (Fra) (22) 25.04.93
17 Gary **MEDEL** (Chl) (28) 03.08.87
83 Felipe **MELO** (Bra) (32) 26.08.83
44 Ivan **PERISIC** (Cro) (26) 02.02.89

FORWARDS
11 Jonathan **BIABIANY** (Vra) (27) 28.04.88
9 Mauro **ICARDI** (Arg) (22) 19.02.93
10 Stevan **JOVETIC** (Mne) (26) 02.11.89
22 Adem **LJAJIC** (Ser) (24) 29.09.91
97 Rey **MANAJ** (Alb) (18) 24.02.97
8 Rodrigo **PALACIO** (Arg) (33) 05.02.82

COACH
Roberto **MANCINI** (51) 27.11.64

JUVENTUS

GOALKEEPERS
38 Emil **AUDERO** (18) 18.01.97
1 Gianluigi **BUFFON** (37) 28.01.78
25 **NETO** (Bra) (26) 19.07.89
34 **RUBINHO** (Bra) (33) 04.08.82

DEFENDERS
15 Andrea **BARZAGLI** (34) 08.05.81
4 Martin **CACERES** (Uru) (28) 07.04.87
3 Giorgio **CHIELLINI** (31) 14.08.84
19 Leonardo **BONUCCI** (28) 01.05.87
33 Patrice **EVRA** (Fra) (34) 15.05.81
26 Stephan **LICHTSTEINER** (Swi) (31) 16.01.84
24 Daniele **RUGANI** (21) 29.07.94
42 Giulio **PARODI** (18) 30.09.97
12 Alex **SANDRO** (Bra) (24) 26.01.91

MIDFIELDERS
22 Kwadwo **ASAMOAH** (Gha) (27) 09.12.88
16 Juan **CUADRADO** (Col) (27) 26.05.88
11 **HERNANES** (Bra) (30) 29.05.85
6 Sami **KHEDIRA** (Ger) (28) 04.04.87
18 Mario **LEMINA** (Gab) (22) 01.09.93
8 Claudio **MARCHISIO** (29) 19.01.86
20 Simone **PADOIN** (31) 18.03.84
37 Roberto **PEREYRA** (Arg) (24) 07.01.91
10 Paul **POGBA** (Fra) (22) 15.03.93
27 Stefano **STURARO** (22) 09.03.93
40 Mattia **VITALE** (18) 01.10.97

FORWARDS
21 Paulo **DYBALA** (Arg) (22) 15.11.93
39 Andrea **FAVILLI** (18) 17.05.97
17 Mario **MANDZUKIC** (Cro) (29) 21.05.86
9 Alvaro **MORATA** (Spa) (23) 23.10.92
45 Guido **VADALA** (Arg) (18) 08.02.97
7 Simone **ZAZA** (24) 25.06.91

COACH
Massimiliano **ALLEGRI** (48) 11.08.67

SAMPDORIA

GOALKEEPERS
57 Alberto **BRIGNOLI** (24) 19.08.91
96 Samuele **MASSOLO** (19) 05.04.96
1 Christian **PUGGIONI** (34) 17.01.81
2 Emiliano **VIVIANO** (30) 01.12.85

DEFENDERS
5 Mattia **CASSANI** (32) 26.08.83
6 Andrea **CODA** (30) 25.04.85
29 Lorenzo **DE SILVESTRI** (27) 23.05.88
3 Djamel **MESBAH** (Alg) (31) 09.10.84
4 Niklas **MOISANDER** (Fin) (30) 29.09.85
13 Pedro **PEREIRA** (Por) (17) 22.01.98
19 Vasco **REGINI** (25) 09.09.90
26 Matias **SILVESTRE** (Arg) (31) 25.09.84
87 Ervin **ZUKANOVIC** (Bos) (28) 11.02.87

MIDFIELDERS
8 Edgar **BARRETO** (Par) (31) 15.07.84
77 Carlos **CARBONERO** (Col) (25) 25.07.90
18 Lazaros **CHRISTODOULOPOULOS** (Gre) (29) 19.12.86
10 Joaquin **CORREA** (Arg) (21) 13.08.94
7 **FERNANDO** (Bra) (23) 03.03.92
95 David **IVAN** (Slk) (20) 26.02.95
20 Nenad **KRSTICIC** (Ser) (25) 03.07.90
17 Angelo **PALOMBO** (34) 25.09.81
92 Michele **ROCCA** (19) 06.02.96
97 Leonardo **SERINELLI** (18) 13.05.97
21 Roberto **SORIANO** (24) 08.02.91

FORWARDS
11 Federico **BONAZZOLI** (18) 21.05.97
99 Antonio **CASSANO** (33) 12.07.82
23 **EDER** (29) 15.11.86
24 Luis **MURIEL** (Col) (24) 16.04.91
80 Edoardo **ONETO** (19) 23.02.96
9 Alejandro **RODRIGUEZ** (Spa) (24) 30.07.91

COACH
Vincenzo **MONTELLA** (41) 18.06.74

SASSUOLO

GOALKEEPERS
47 Andrea **CONSIGLI** (28) 27.01.87
22 Bryan **COSTA** (17) 28.07.98
79 Gianluca **PEGOLO** (34) 25.03.81
1 Alberto **POMINI** (34) 17.03.81

DEFENDERS
15 Francesco **ACERBI** (27) 10.02.88
96 Claud **ADJAPONG** (17) 06.05.98
5 Luca **ANTEI** (23) 19.04.92
20 Lorenzo **ARIAUDO** (26) 11.06.89
28 Paolo **CANNAVARO** (34) 26.06.81
38 Martin **ERLIC** (Cro) (17) 24.01.98
21 Leonardo **FONTANESI** (19) 20.02.96
23 Marcello **GAZZOLA** (30) 03.04.85
3 Alessandro **LONGHI** (26) 25.06.89
13 Federico **PELUSO** (31) 20.01.84
26 Emanuele **TERRANOVA** (28) 14.04.87
11 Sime **VRSALJKO** (Cro) (23) 10.01.92

MIDFIELDERS
8 Davide **BIONDINI** (32) 24.01.83
37 Jeremie **BROH** (Fra) (18) 21.03.97
88 Daniele **CIPOLLA** (17) 09.02.98
32 Alfred **DUNCAN** (Gha) (22) 10.03.93
10 Karim **LARIBI** (24) 20.04.91
4 Francesco **MAGNANELLI** (31) 12.11.84
7 Simone **MISSIROLI** (29) 23.05.86
6 Lorenzo **PELLEGRINI** (19) 19.06.96

FORWARDS
25 Domenico **BERARDI** (21) 01.08.94
92 Gregoire **DEFREL** (Fra) (24) 17.06.91
9 Diego **FALCINELLI** (24) 26.06.91
99 Sergio **FLOCCARI** (34) 12.11.81
83 Antonio **FLORO FLORES** (32) 18.06.83
16 Matteo **POLITANO** (22) 03.08.93
17 Nicola **SANSONE** (24) 10.09.91

COACH
Eusebio **DI FRANCESCO** (46) 08.09.69

TORINO

GOALKEEPERS
13 Luca **CASTELLAZZI** (40) 19.07.75
28 Salvador **ICHAZO** (Uru) (23) 26.01.92
1 Daniele **PADELLI** (30) 25.10.85

DEFENDERS
26 Danilo **AVELAR** (Bra) (26) 09.06.89
5 Cesare **BOVO** (32) 14.01.83
25 Kamil **GLIK** (Pol) (27) 03.02.88
18 Pontus **JANSSON** (Swe) (24) 13.02.91
96 Valerio **MANTOVANI** (19) 18.04.96
19 Nikola **MAKSIMOVIC** (Ser) (24) 25.11.91
3 Cristian **MOLINARO** (32) 30.07.83
97 Andrea **MORELLO** (18) 16.07.97
24 Emiliano **MORETTI** (34) 11.06.81
33 Bruno **PERES** (Bra) (25) 01.03.90
44 Vasyl **PRYIMA** (Ukr) (24) 10.06.91
21 Gaston **SILVA** (Uru) (21) 05.03.94
7 Davide **ZAPPACOSTA** (23) 11.06.92

MIDFIELDERS
6 Afriyie **ACQUAH** (Gha) (23) 05.01.92
16 Daniele **BASELLI** (23) 12.03.92
15 Marco **BENASSI** (21) 08.09.94
8 Alexander **FARNERUD** (Swe) (31) 01.05.84
14 Alessandro **GAZZI** (32) 28.01.83
4 Joel **OBI** (Nga) (24) 22.05.91
23 Sanjin **PRCIC** (Bos) (22) 20.11.93
20 Giuseppe **VIVES** (35) 14.07.80

FORWARDS
22 **AMAURI** (35) 03.06.80
9 Andrea **BELOTTI** (22) 20.12.93
11 Maxi **LOPEZ** (Arg) (31) 03.04.84
17 Josef **MARTINEZ** (Ven) (22) 19.05.93
27 Fabio **QUAGLIARELLA** (32) 31.01.83

COACH
Giampiero **VENTURA** (67) 14.01.48

UDINESE

GOALKEEPERS
31 Orestis **KARNEZIS** (Gre) (30) 11.07.85
40 Samuele **PERISAN** (18) 21.08.97
90 Rafael **ROMO** (Ven) (25) 25.02.90
97 Alex **MERET** (18) 22.03.97

DEFENDERS
53 Ali **ADNAN** (Irq) (22) 19.12.93
32 Agostino **CAMIGLIANO** (21) 11.07.94
5 **DANILO** (Bra) (31) 10.05.84
11 Maurizio **DOMIZZI** (35) 28.06.80
21 **EDENILSON** (Bra) (26) 19.12.89
30 **FELIPE** (Bra) (31) 31.07.84
75 Thomas **HEURTAUX** (Fra) (27) 03.07.88
13 Emanuel **INSUA** (Arg) (24) 10.04.91
26 Giovanni **PASQUALE** (33) 05.01.82
89 Ivan **PIRIS** (Par) (26) 10.03.89
2 Molla **WAGUE** (Mli) (24) 21.02.91
27 Silvan **WIDMER** (Swi) (22) 05.03.93

MIDFIELDERS
7 Emmanuel **AGYEMANG-BADU** (Gha) (25) 02.12.90
95 Lucas **EVANGELISTA** (Bra) (20) 06.05.95
8 Bruno **FERNANDES** (Por) (21) 08.09.94
19 **GUILHERME** (Bra) (24) 05.04.91
16 Manuel **ITURRA** (Chl) (31) 23.06.84
33 Panagiotis **KONE** (Gre) (28) 26.07.87
20 Francesco **LODI** (31) 23.03.84
23 **MARQUINHO** (Bra) (29) 03.07.86
52 Alexander **MERKEL** (Kaz) (23) 22.02.92
41 Simone **PONTISSO** (18) 20.03.97

FORWARDS
74 Rodrigo **AGUIRRE** (Uru) (21) 01.10.94
10 Antonio **DI NATALE** (38) 13.10.77
18 Stipe **PERICA** (Cro) (20) 07.07.95
77 Cyril **THEREAU** (Fra) (32) 24.04.83
9 Duvan **ZAPATA** (Col) (24) 01.04.91

COACH
Stefano **COLANTUONO** (53) 23.10.62

VERONA

GOALKEEPERS
37 Ferdinando **COPPOLA** (37) 10.06.78
95 Pierluigi **GOLLINI** (20) 18.03.95
1 **RAFAEL** (33) 03.03.82
32 Enrico **VENCATO** (17) 19.12.98

DEFENDERS
6 Michelangelo **ALBERTAZZI** (24) 07.01.91
40 Andrea **BADAN** (17) 21.03.98
22 Matteo **BIANCHETTI** (22) 17.03.93
5 Filip **HELANDER** (Swe) (22) 22.04.93
4 Rafael **MARQUEZ** (Mex) (26) 13.02.79
18 Vangelis **MORAS** (Gre) (34) 26.08.81
3 Eros **PISANO** (28) 31.03.87
39 Davide **RICCARDI** (19) 09.04.96
69 Samuel **SOUPRAYEN** (Fra) (26) 18.02.89
41 Claudio **WINCK** (Bra) (21) 15.04.94

MIDFIELDERS
97 Luca **CHECCHIN** (18) 03.05.97
19 Leandro **GRECO** (29) 19.07.86
74 Nicola **GUGLIELMELLI** (Ger) (18) 23.07.97
10 Emil **HALLFREDSSON** (Ice) (31) 26.06.84
23 Artur **IONITA** (Mol) (25) 17.08.90
7 Bosko **JANKOVIC** (Ser) (31) 01.03.84
27 **MATUZALEM** (Bra) (35) 10.06.80
2 **ROMULO** (Bra) (28) 22.05.87
26 Jacopo **SALA** (24) 05.12.91
38 Alessandro **SPERI** (19) 25.09.96
24 Federico **VIVIANI** (23) 24.03.92
13 Pawel **WSZOLEK** (Pol) (23) 30.04.92
20 Mattia **ZACCAGNI** (20) 16.06.95

FORWARDS
93 Mohamed **FARES** (Alg) (19) 15.02.96
21 Juanito **GOMEZ** (Arg) (30) 20.05.85
11 Giampaolo **PAZZINI** (31) 02.08.84
16 Luca **SILIGARDI** (27) 26.01.88
9 Luca **TONI** (38) 26.05.77
35 Lubomir **TUPTA** (Slk) (17) 27.03.98

COACH
Luigi **DELNERI** (65) 23.08.50

(ages as of 30.12.15)

World Soccer's GREAT MATCHES

JULY 5, 1982, BARCELONA: WORLD CUP

Italy 3 Brazil 2

A Paolo Rossi hat-trick gave the *Azzurri* victory over the pre-tournament favourites on their way to a third world title

Clinical...Paolo Rossi (in blue) gets his second

The Spain 82 World Cup was the first to feature 24 teams, with the top two in each group going into a second phase of four groups of three. The group winners would then contest the semi-finals.

Having both beaten Argentina in the second stage, the match between Italy and Brazil at Espanyol's Estadio Sarria therefore became the decider.

World Soccer's report on the game began: "We'd had some pleasing matches, the occasional outstanding individual performances, but now the classic." And what a classic it turned out to be.

The report continued: "Brazil had been everybody's favourites. Yet on this marvellous afternoon they were matched and eventually outmanoeuvred by an Italian side who discovered they could meet the ultimate challenge.

"Italy needed victory to reach the semi-finals, Brazil a draw. Twice the Brazilians equalised and you wondered whether the Italians could possibly find another retort. Incredibly they could."

Both teams were packed with star names, but "the man who responded more magnificently than anyone was Paolo Rossi".

The Juventus forward had just finished a two-year ban following a match-fixing scandal, but the 25-year-old was once again back to his best. "Suddenly the touch was there again; an early goal confirmed it and two more made up a phenomenal personal contribution."

World Soccer's report concluded: "Brazil played well, but on the day Italy had the staying power and the ability to punish defensive errors. All of which left us with an absorbing, ever-tilting spectacular to revive memories of Italy's Mexican extravaganza against the Germans [in the 1970 World Cup].

"Splendour to the very end." WS

Free-kick...Brazil's Eder

Referee: Klein (Isr)

KEY MOMENTS

Opener...Paolo Rossi (left) puts Italy ahead

5min Antonio Cabrini crosses to the far post where Paolo Rossi's glancing header finds the net. **1-0**

12min Receiving the ball in his own half, Socrates runs forward, exchanges passes with Zico and beats Dino Zoff at the near post. **1-1**

25min A poor pass across his goal by Toninho Cerezo is intercepted by Rossi, who fires a shot through the hands of goalkeeper Waldir Peres. **2-1**

58min Rossi is through on goal again, with just Peres to beat, but shoots wide of the post.

68min Zico creates an opening for Brazil and Falcao, running into space, dummies one way before unleashing a left-foot shot that beats Zoff from the edge of the area. **2-2**

75min Brazil fail to clear an Italy corner and Marco Tardelli's shot from the edge of the area falls to Rossi, who has an easy tap in. **3-2**

Mobbed...Socrates scores

86min Giancarlo Antognoni has the ball in the net for Italy, but it is disallowed for offside.

89min Oscar gets his head to a cross from Eder but Zoff smothers the attempt.

Level...Falcao (out of picture) makes it 2-2

NEXT MONTH FEBRUARY ISSUE ON SALE JANUARY 29

WWW.UKSOCCERSHOP.COM
INFO@UKSOCCERSHOP.COM - 0844 332 1221

UKSOCCERSHOP

NUMBER ONE FOR FOOTBALL SHIRTS

SHIRT PRINTING

Customise this season's new shirts from Barcelona, Real Madrid, Bayern, England, Ajax, Catalunya and more in the latest printing styles!

NEXT DAY DELIVERY

DHL NEXT DAY DELIVERY TO UK, EUROPE AND USA. REST OF THE WORLD: 2/3 DAYS. FULLY TRACKABLE SHIPPING TO EVERY COUNTRY!

NEW EURO 2016 SHIRTS AVAILABLE NOW

SPAIN EURO 2016
AWAY SHIRT
£54.99

SWEDEN EURO 2016
HOME SHIRT
£54.99

BELGIUM EURO 2016
AWAY SHIRT
£54.99

RUSSIA EURO 2016
HOME SHIRT
£54.99

DENMARK EURO 2016
HOME SHIRT
£54.99

CZECH REP. EURO 2016
HOME SHIRT
£59.99

SWITZERLAND EURO 2016
HOME SHIRT
£59.99

AUSTRIA EURO 2016
HOME SHIRT
£59.99

GERMANY EURO 2016
AWAY SHIRT
£54.99

SWEDEN EURO 2016
AWAY SHIRT
£54.99

WWW.UKSOCCERSHOP.COM

PRO:DIRECT

CONCAVE®

SEE THE EXCLUSIVE **CONCAVE VOLT** COLLECTION ONLINE INCLUDING JUNIORS
PRICES FROM **£45**

WWW.PRODIRECTSOCCER.COM - THE PROFESSIONAL'S CHOICE